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MA (ed) BA HONS PGCE

An Investigation into the role of professional
learning on the online teaching identities of
higher education lecturers

For the Award of:

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Abstract

The economic, political and social climate in the UK has, in recent years, provoked some of the most profound changes to higher education since its inception in the Middle Ages. In addition, the pace of internet technologies and computer access has given rise to a far greater number of fully online courses offered by campus-based universities as well those, such as The Open University, which have traditionally offered a blend of online and face-to-face learning. But research reveals that adapting face-to-face and blended methods is challenging for higher education lecturers, particularly when teaching part-time or entirely remotely from their institutions. This three-year qualitative study investigates what type of professional learning contributes positively to the online teaching identities of part-time lecturers. Using a phenomenological, narrative approach it reveals what type of professional learning better equips lecturers for full online engagement and to what extent these needs are being met. It concludes with a series of recommendations for future development and professional learning which have relevance to all those who work in a fully online teaching environment.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Structure

This chapter explores the reasons underlying the research. It discusses why this particular group of people were chosen and introduces the implications of this for the methodology, data analysis and findings. The chapter also outlines the context for the study, placing it against a backdrop of the political, economic and pedagogical climate which prevails at the time of writing.

Introduction

My interest in online teaching identity began some time ago when I was working as a part-time distance teacher educator on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education programme at the University of Greenwich. I realised via the comments of my students – all practising teachers and trainers in professional contexts – that the teacher educator they had become familiar with online was sometimes very different to the person they met in the face-to-face tutorials that followed teaching observations set within their place of work. My curiosity increased when I began work as an associate lecturer on the MA programme, a programme which relied heavily on online communication as part of the mode of delivery. I felt that teaching online was a very different experience from that within a face-to-face environment. Different not only because of the tools available – wikis, blogs and online student forums – but also different because of the way that I felt about my role online; different because the teacher that I felt I was online seemed to differ from the way that I articulated my teaching persona in a face-to-face environment.

When I moved into an educational development role, at the same university, it struck me that although there were plenty of opportunities available for development within the online role they tended largely to concentrate on skills-based manipulation of tools. There was little around that investigated the affective elements of teaching online: how teaching online feels, how you portray yourself as an online teacher and the ways in which your feelings about teaching online affect not only the student learning but your professional identity as a whole; your conception of whether online teachers feel effective and creative in their role. Working in educational development at a time when an increasing number of modules and qualifications were moving online, I began to develop a strong interest in what sort of professional learning actually made a difference to an individual's feelings of self-salience and professional efficacy: what made them feel '*bien dans sa peau*',¹ a French expression that conjures up the feeling of cognitive, affective and situative elements that are needed in order to feel professionally at home and motivated in a role.

The Open University (OU) has 8000 part-time associate lecturing staff, teaching on over 500 courses using a blend of media. Some 62% of modules offered are web-focused and use a variety of tools to deliver learning. Some modules have been using e-technology for some time while others are still in the process of adopting new technologies. My decision to investigate the online teaching identities of associate lecturers, rather than full-time or part-time lecturing staff physically located within the institution, is based on my own experiences as a part-time lecturer within the contexts outlined earlier. The particular demands of the

¹ Feeling good in your own skin, feeling good about yourself.

nature of these fractional contracts have particular implications for this study. Associate lecturers are working at a distance: from one another, from their students and from the institution. The distance is both physical and perceived: they are often located far from any of the OU's regional or national centres and they are perceptually located at some distance from the administrative and academic centres. Thus this study is very different in both character and methodology from the type of approaches that have been used to investigate professional identities of staff who are physically located within institutions (King and Ross, 2004; Baldwin, 2008). Lecturing staff, either part-time or full-time, within these contexts have been shown to have very specific relationships with the institution, their students and their peers: relationships that come about via activities which can range from formal and informal departmental and interdepartmental meetings, to chats over lunch with other lecturers and administrative staff (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Baldwin, 2008; Hanson, 2009). These contextual and climatic differences between this study and those that are primarily located within institutions have implications too for both the insights and conclusions which may be drawn from this study, and the need to qualify them in terms of the specific context within which the study takes place. Concomitantly, this study has particular relevance to what Bryson terms 'a growing army' (2002, p22.) of part-time teaching staff, increasingly employed to fill gaps left by redundancies due to economic constraints, and the need for ever more flexible working in order to accommodate new technologies and the demands of the student as consumer (Newman et al., 2004; Ball, 2007; Hotho, 2008).

Associate lecturers are not a homogeneous group, but emanate from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are employed full-time in other universities and may teach only a few hours per week for the OU, others work virtually full-time,

combining a number of fractional contracts and working over a variety of programmes and modules. Some work full- or part-time as professionals within other contexts: law, social work, nursing, teaching, and so on. Some have professional and administrative roles within either the OU or other organisations, making them privy to different understandings and priorities in terms of policy decisions and imperatives, practices, pedagogies, and procedures. This, too, needed to be factored in to decisions both on methodology and in relation to findings, highlighting the importance of the phenomenological approach, discussed further within Chapter 3.

In addition to the heterogeneous nature of this group of staff, the study needed to consider access to these individuals, and the ways in which the University's operating structure may impact upon this. The OU has a highly complex and stratified management structure. Within the organisation there are six faculties: The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Faculty of Arts, The Faculty of Maths and Computing, The Faculty of Social Science, The Faculty of Science, and The Open University Business School. In addition to these subject divisions there are 13 regional and national centres situated throughout the UK. The regional centres act as both administrative centres and regional employers for associate lecturers. The reporting lines for associate lecturers are also complex: in some faculties they report directly to a staff tutor, a full- or part-time academic member of staff located at one of the regional bases, but in some faculties they may report directly to a senior faculty manager, a member of staff whose contract is academic-related rather than academic. The implications of reporting directly to either one or the other is outside the scope of this study but this particular structure raises important questions in terms of both access and method for the study: should the research be based in a single faculty, from associate lecturers in

a single geographical region, or should the sample be drawn from across the University, drawing from all faculties and regions? The choice and rationale for the sample is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

There are many interpretations of what it means to teach online; it is a nebulous concept defined in different ways depending upon both organisation and context. The Joint Information Systems Council (JISC) defines it as ‘the use of learning technologies in learning opportunities’ (2004, p. 10), while the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) defines it as ‘the use of technologies in learning opportunities’ (2005, p. 5). For the purposes of this study it is considered to be learning and teaching that is carried out online, and this may, or may not, be complemented by other forms of interaction: telephone, face-to-face tutorials and other means of communication.

In 2009, the HEFCE Online Learning Task Force was set up to maintain and develop the position of UK higher education as a world leader in online learning (HEFCE Online Learning Task Force, 2010). The initial report of the task force indicates that students expect ‘easier 24-seven access to learning resources and support’ (p. 1). A key consideration of the task force’s work is an investigation into ‘how institutions can support and enable staff to develop their expertise in this area’ and also to develop key ‘organisational models to deliver online and blended offerings’ (p. 2).

In addition, profound transformations within the higher education sector due to social, educational and economic factors imply and, to a certain extent, drive the need for ever greater online engagement (Browne, 2010; HEFCE, 2010). At the moment there are some 2800 higher education modules offered online (HEFCE,

2010), and in light of current economic considerations, the rise in tuition fees and the need for economic and effective education on a global scale (Browne, 2010; OECD, 2009), this number looks set to rise, indicating a greater need than ever for higher education teaching staff to be able to work comfortably and confidently in the online environment.

The HEFCE strategic plan 2006–11 states that: ‘students expect their experience of higher education (HE) to deepen their personal and professional development, extend their subject knowledge and prepare them for employment and lifelong learning’ (HEFCE, 2009, p. 17). A recent study of UK online learning (White et al., 2010) highlighted the need to support staff in assessing how to use and whether to use non-institutional tools, for example Facebook®, cloud-based applications and other social networking applications, in order to optimise student learning and social experience, while also being aware of the caveats and challenges of using such technology. The JISC e-learning report, (2009) supported this, adding that pedagogical concerns and issues have come a poor second to the business rationale for their implementation and outlining the primacy of the need for lecturers to be in a position to make informed decisions and meaningful comparisons between different teaching approaches and activities online .

But what type of professional learning will equip this increasing population of online teaching staff with the confidence, skills and attributes that will enable them to give students the type of learning experience that will equip them for life in an increasingly competitive world? What type of development will empower their creativity, enabling them to be, as Turkle put it, ‘creative bricoleurs’, able to manipulate their technological environment rather than feeling victims of a system in which technological determinism stifles notions of creativity and feelings of self-

salience, or feeling *bien dans sa peau* (Turkle, 1993; Baxter, 2004; Baxter, 2010)
What are the challenges that face lecturers within an online learning environment?

The National Union of Students (NUS) report to the HEFCE task force further highlighted the need for lecturers to have more development in the field of online learning, stating that as students, they felt concerned that their lecturers were in some cases poorly prepared or lacking in confidence to use technologies which they themselves felt comfortable and confident in using (Porter, 2010). In addition, a number of studies to date have revealed that teaching online is not simply a matter of transferring face-to-face pedagogies to the online environment but, rather, that it engenders new skills and competencies; new ways in which to conceptualise learning (Hanson, 2009; Sheehy et al., 2009).

The wider implications of adopting a salient online teaching identity are profound, in terms of student retention, progression and success. Research to date has shown that the lecturer plays a key role in student success (Tinto, 1975; Yorke, 1999; Fitzgibbon and Prior, 2006), that psychological factors influencing withdrawal from HE courses can be mediated and addressed by the lecturer (Yorke, 1999). In order for this to be as effective as possible, it is imperative that we equip lecturers with the self-salience or capacity to be agentive within their work and professional development, and confidence to be able to perform this role effectively (Baxter, 2010).

A number of areas emerged from the JISC interim report (JISC, 2009). These are important in terms of this study as they outline areas which were highlighted as being points of concern, not only in the context of this study, but also within

Hanson's investigation into the impact of e-learning on academic identities (2009).

Key recommendations from the report are summarised in the points below:

- Good practice must be more easily shared with practitioners
- Examples of effective practices must be more readily collated, analysed and accessed using metadata schema and search terms that 'make sense to practitioners'
- Practitioners need to be in a position to make more informed decisions between comparable activities and approaches
- Researchers and evaluators may also make more meaningful comparisons of different teaching activities and approaches
- Practitioners must be in a position to be able to communicate clearly on their requirements to developers. Likewise, developers need to make clear, the affordances of their systems.

(JISC, 2009, p. 2)

The recommendations above are important to this study as areas that inform the research questions, providing links to the various aspects of teacher identity formation as outlined in Chapter 2. The areas of recommendation also point up important areas such as the primacy of the role of power and agency, communities of practice and continuing autonomy and creativity within the academy; points discussed and expanded upon within the context of this literature review.

The diagram below (Figure 1.1), based on some of the areas raised within the context of the JISC interim report, highlights aspects of teaching that integrate sets of activities and competencies. Some of these are generic, and apply equally to both online and face-to-face teaching situations, for example highly focused sets

of objectives within the practical view. But others, such as those within the situative view, are particularly significant within the context of online teaching situations, as they point to areas that are of key significance in terms of development for teachers, that is, development of identities as capable and confident teachers, facilitating learning dialogues and relationships, creating safe environments for participation.

Some of the elements within the diagram will also have implications for the construction and writing of course materials, as the opportunities for face-to-face interaction are reduced and learners interface with course materials, websites and online student discussion forums, often before having the opportunity for online interaction with their tutor. Aspects such as framing learning outcomes in metacognitive terms will be important so that the students understand not only what learning is intended, but also the ways in which this process of learning will be carried out (Sharpe et al 2009).

Of equal importance are the practical elements of facilitation of learning dialogues and relationships and the need for university systems to provide a framework for this procedure by making intuitive and accessible interfaces available, which can then be manipulated with ease by both student and teacher.

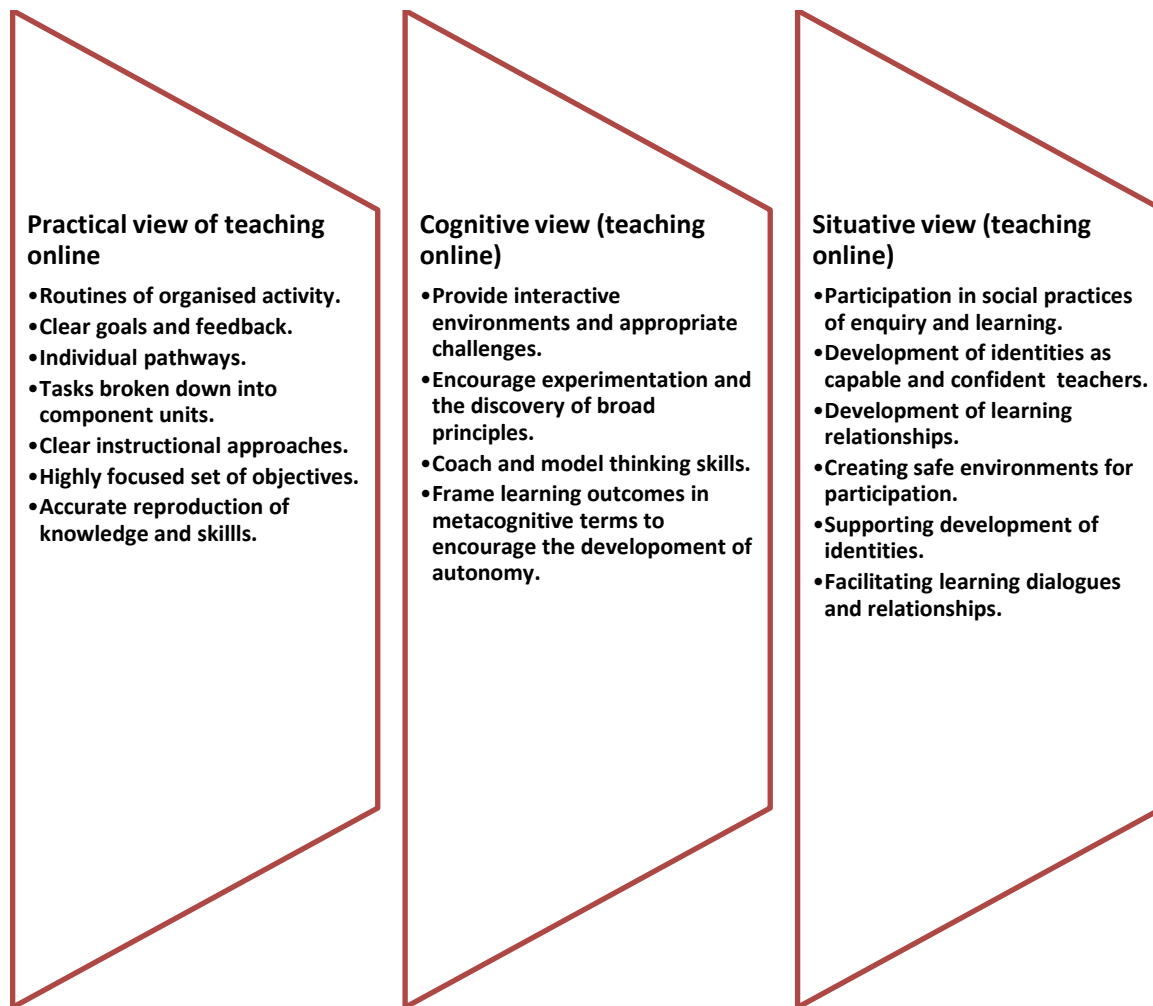


Figure 1.1 Three elements of online teaching (Source: adapted from JISC, 2010, p. 10)

Discussions within the context of the literature review outline how these three views link to professional identities and concomitantly to the integration of effective professional learning in the formation and sustenance of the teaching identities of the individuals.

Professional identity is a nebulous concept to pin down and has been explored from many perspectives: from the grand psychological and biological theories of the twentieth century, to more sociocultural approaches to the subject. So the first challenge for this study was to decide on how the research would approach the

task of defining professional identity. This resulted in the development of a new framework for professional identity based upon literature and feminist approaches to research and identity work (Gilligan, 1982; Rose, 1982; Kelly et al., 1994).

Having defined a framework for defining identity and established that there are many identities residing within an individual, all of which go towards contributing to the formation of new identities, it was then necessary to examine the notion of 'professional learning': what is meant by professional learning and what type of professional learning is powerful enough to make an impact on the professional identities of an individual? Previous work into professional identities of linguists (Baxter, 2004) revealed there to be many interpretations of what constitutes professional learning. These definitions ranged from chats with colleagues to learning outside of work, which initially may have seemed to have little relevance to the working context but which later proved to be important in developing new professional understandings and insights. My interest in the work of John Heron in addressing the cognitive, affective and situational aspects of learning, led me to explore his six category intervention analysis framework as a possible framework for professional learning (Heron, 1999, 2001). This is explored further in Chapter 3.

Once I had developed analytical frameworks for the study, a key question remained. The professional doctorate is designed to make a practical, policy-orientated contribution to knowledge, and its function is the provision of original work, so what did the study need to look at in order to fulfil these two criteria? As the move to the online environment represents not only one of the greatest strategic changes that the OU has seen since its inception, but also one currently being experienced by the whole sector, due to political, economic and

technological drivers, I concluded that it needed to look at the area of organisational change management. That perlocutionary and rhetorical discourses emerging as a result of market-driven factors, advocating online education as the only way in which to widen participation in an age of economic austerity, need to be measured against the realities of change.

With this in mind, the final element for the study involved identifying a change implementation model as a framework for analysis of the points within which, in order to effect successful change (as defined by the model), additional interventions would be necessary. It seemed appropriate to use the very model currently being advocated by the OU in its change management education programme,² one of the most profound change management programmes ever implemented across the University (Baxter and Martyn, 2010). The model was developed by Kotter (1995) and was being used as a basis for change management development events for all University staff.

This study does not aim to evaluate the different attributes of change management models but seeks, rather, to employ the specific model advocated by the OU, in order to analyse the impact of the changes with regard to the associate lecturer role and to highlight ways in which effective professional development and learning has the power to create effective distance provision for the twenty-first century. The model is also employed to outline areas in which there are still concerns and which may impact negatively on online teaching identities.

² A programme of change management workshops being rolled out to all regional and national University staff.

Chapter 2 Literature review

Structure

The literature review begins with a brief outline of how the review is structured, and is followed by a section on the approach taken. It is then divided into three sections, each discussing aspects and elements of teaching identities as they manifest within face-to-face and online teaching. The first section discusses the nature of teaching identities and contextualises them within the field of identity research. This then leads into an exploration of the changing nature of teaching identities and three elements that have emerged within the literature as having an impact upon the evolution of these identities: communities of practice, embodiment and teacher presence, and the role of language. In the third section the review turns to the ways in which preparation for new online teaching roles is effected, and to what extent this preparation impacts upon the practices and affective teaching domain of lecturers. Each of the three sections concludes with a short summary. The chapter is brought to a close with an overall summary of the review and implications for the study.

Approach

My previous work on professional identities and motivation (Baxter, 2004) provided an initial focus for the review. This work investigated the motivational factors underlying the choice of individuals to use a second language as a means for employment. The relationship between motivation and professional identity was tentatively explored within this project: its focus was primarily on motivational factors, but traits associated with professional identities emerged as a result of the

interviews. In exploring the reasons why individuals used a second language as a means for employment my findings revealed that their working identities and personal identities were intertwined: particularly in the case of those who were happy to have chosen that particular occupation. In cases where respondents were less happy in their chosen career there was evidence of a departure between their working identities and those identities they used within social situations (Baxter, 2004). This suggested to me that professional and working identities, although not necessarily always in harmony with one another, acted as points on a trajectory, each influencing one another to varying degrees. Because of the reflexive nature of this research (Deacon et al, 1998, p. 42), I also felt sceptical as to the degree that a working identity might be parsed from any other being used by an individual to make sense of a situation.

It was during my masters research that I became interested in the ways in which feminist methodologies and the use of narrative research could be used to provide deep insights into the ways in which individuals perceived their world. Due to the strong links between motivation and salient professional identity (Baxter, 2004, p. 66), I felt that this approach was worthy of further consideration in relation to this study.

In order to explore the ways in which professional teaching identities are formed, my first task was to contextualise those identities within the wider field of identity research. The vast literature in this area meant that the ambit of the initial search needed to be constrained, so in order to do this I confined it to research into teaching identities that employed narrative and feminist methodologies. Using the search terms: teaching identities, feminist methods+teaching identities, academic identities and teaching identities in higher education, I constructed a 'map of the

literature' (Hart, 1998, p. 31). This revealed areas that emerged as being influential in terms of the ways in which teaching identities are formed and shaped and appear within the following chapter under the heading 'The Nature of Teaching Identities'. Moving on from this, my search then concentrated upon literature which documented the ways in which identities change according to the contexts in which they are used. Key influences impacting on professional identities which emerged from the literature were then explored in greater depth. These are explored in this chapter under the heading 'The Changing Nature of Teaching Identities.' The final part of the literature review investigated the ways in which individuals prepared for new teaching roles, exploring individual's perceptions of development. This section appears here under the heading 'Preparing for new teaching roles: effecting change.

The initial search on the nature of teaching identities produced what Hart (1998, p. 34) terms a 'vocabulary of concepts', which helped to both contextualise and focus the research according to methodologies employed in investigation of the teaching identities and conceptual underpinning of this research. At this point, key writers in the field were identified. During the second stage of the process, the changing nature of teaching identities, I investigated literature on online teaching. The vocabulary of concepts emerging from both helped to engender my 'theoretical sensitivity' (Gorelick, 1991, p. 22), which informed the framework for identity analysis (see Figure 2.1 below).

Research pertaining to the design of online learning was not included in the review, since, after an initial exploration of this area, I felt that it concentrated more on learning design technology and content than on the affective domain of the professionals engaged in delivery.

(Note: Within the context of this study the words lecturer and associate lecturer are used interchangeably. This is due to the fact that a review is currently under way on both the title and nature of the role of associate lecturer.)

The nature of teaching identities: definition and articulation

This section begins with a short contextualisation of teaching identities in relation to the wider field of identity research. It discusses the nature of teaching identities and ways in which research within the field explores and defines them. As part of this exploration, the study then turns to the factors thought to be most influential within their formation. It looks at ways in which they influence the relationship between teaching identities and other identities used by individuals to make sense of their world. This, in turn, leads to a discussion on convergences and tensions between different paradigms and how they may be used to create a framework for identity analysis.

The final part of the section suggests that complementary aspects within these paradigms may be used to develop a congruent view of identity formation. It concludes by proposing a postmodern, feminist view of identity in which social influences combine agentive and innate individual elements to form an identity which may then be narrativised by the individual. This leads into the following section which explores the ways in which identities change and are learned and what implications this may have for professional learning.

The importance of developing a professional identity within a sphere or field has been recognised as a measure of mental health by a number of researchers in the

field of psychology and counselling, acting as a key element in both the retention and the motivation of the individual and linking strongly to performance and general job satisfaction (Maclure, 1993a; 1993b; Beijgaard et al., 2004; Hurley 2009). The idea of teaching identity is complex and has been explored in many ways, including studies involving role concept (Kaiser, 2002; Kevern and Webb, 2004), models of professional development (Gibbs and Habeshaw, 2002), teaching inventories (Trigwell and Prosser, 2001) and explorations of professional learning and development (Knight et al., 2006).

The major psychological theories of the twentieth century have also provided the basis for many of the understandings around identity development and include a complex mix of biological and psychological attributes that go to make up identities (Piaget, 1928; Bandura, 1977; Skinner, 1988). But over a period of years, some of these theories have been criticised both by postmodernists, such as Foucault (Foucault, 1980; Lyotard, 1984), and by feminists (Rowbotham 1981; Josselson, 1996), who claim these theories to be too individualist, too positivist and founded on a universalist view that is predominantly based upon the ethnocentric theories of white, middle-class men. Proponents of this school of thought also claim that these theories of identity privilege maintain and perpetuate the values and interests of certain social groups at the expense of others: that they posit psychosocial realities, based largely upon the 'psychosocial experiences of the theorist' (Sorell et al, 2001, p. 99). It could be argued that no framework evolves from a notionally objective position, that, to a certain extent, all frameworks for identity development are constructed via a combination of research and the personal experiences of the individual. Because of this, many researchers within the field of the social sciences have developed different approaches which they view as more inclusive. These approaches are based on the stories and narratives

of the individual and the research is viewed from a feminist standpoint. This negates the notion of objectivity in favour of the notion that all standpoints are subjective, dependent upon the perception of the individual, and that the standpoint of the individual is key to the notion of an individual's identity.

Early in 2004, Beijaard et al. presented a literature review which investigated ways and means of researching teaching identities. Their conclusions assert that teaching identity formation is an on-going process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences, and professional identities are shaped by person and context. The review also showed that professional teaching identities consist of sub-identities that merge within an individual, highlighting that while the identities of individuals are shaped in a sociocultural context, the individuals themselves are agentive in their own identities' formation.

Their work highlighted the important relationship between learning and identity and pointed up the fact that teachers need to be active in learning processes of professional development. That professional learning is a powerful tool in both the creation of new teaching identities and the sustenance of those identities already present within the individual, identities which go some way to providing the vital bridge: integrating existing and new knowledge and definitions of self. This leads to the conclusion that professional identities are not something that people have innately but, rather, something that they learn to make sense of: in this particular case, teaching. This supports Gilligan's view in terms of the feminist approach to identity formation, whereby the individual is to a certain extent 'agentive in their own identity formation' (1982, p. 122); able to articulate their identities and, to a certain extent, shape and form them in order to fulfil needs and exigencies of a particular situation or role.

The feminist view of identity formation is also supported by work founded upon the principles of third wave feminism, which privileges the ‘anecdotal, subjective and frivolous aspects of self-talk’ (Gilligan, 1982; Maclure, 1993b; Sikes, 2006) and denies the idea that identity formation can be analysed according to a set of preordained ‘truths’. It is supported by Brabeck’s view of feminist philosophical orientation in prioritising the ‘phenomenological, contextual and relativistic viewpoint’ (1993, p. 37) over that of the so-called rational view. Etienne Wenger reifies this, arguing that identity is:

a work in progress, shaped by efforts – both individual and collective – to create a coherence through time that threads together successive forms of participation in the definition of a person incorporating the past and the future in the experience of the present.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 45)

Wenger also views them as ‘invested in histories of practice and generational politics’ (1998, p. 158), keying into the Foucaultian idea that our identities are coloured by our individual beliefs and that these beliefs, whether true or not, are truths for us and, as such, profoundly affect our approach to situations and people (Foucault, 1973a, 1973b, 1980). This point is explored to a greater extent in Chapter 3, within the context of the framework for identity analysis (Figure 3.1).

The idea of identities as ‘trajectories’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 56) supports Beijaard’s assertion that professional teaching identities consist of sub-identities that more or less harmonise (Beijaard et al., 2004). However, this also tends to suggest that once a new identity has been embraced the old one is put aside, an idea which is

not supported by the substantial body of feminist longitudinal work on identity formation, and which examines the formation of identities from cradle to grave (Josselson, 1987; McAdams et al., 2006). This supports the view that identity formation is more complex: that within a single person identities that are learned are integrated with other identities and understandings to produce a composite collage of shifting understandings and life views (Clandinin, 1986; McAdams et al., 2006). In this approach, previous identities provide the bridge between new and old, in the same way that language students integrate a second language more readily if the learner is already familiar with language learning and able to employ the strategies that they found to be most effective within the context of their initial experience.

This has implications for researchers investigating identity, pointing up the need to consider not just a single identity but multiple conflating identities that combine to form a whole. For this particular study this indicates that the research method needs not only to be able to uncover and express the primary teaching identity but also to articulate and represent the ways in which the teaching identities interlink and meld with other aspects and identities within the individual.

The notion that identities are unstable, that they are shaped and formed via a complex mix of innate characteristics, sociocultural influences and shifting hegemonies, aligns with a postmodern theory of identity (Edwards and Usher, 1994). This notion, which also embraces the feminist view of the individual as agentive within their own identity formation, is articulated within the work of Husserl (1931, 1970), who regards the identity as interaction between a person's consciousness and the world inhabited by the individual. This phenomenological approach privileges the investigation of identity formation as a focus on life and

circumstances ‘as they appear to the individual’ (Langridge, 2007, p. 13). This view of identities, seen through the lens of the individual, suggests, rather, an archetypal quest in which the individual chooses which elements and influences to incorporate into their identities, while also making a conscious effort to reject others. This existentialist view of identity privileges the idea of personal agency in identity formation and supports a phenomenological feminist approach to identity research; an approach which has been employed in a number of studies on identity within the caring professions (Öhlen and Segesten, 1998; Hurley 2009).

But Henkel’s view of academic identities sees them primarily as defined by several key drivers: the institution, the discipline and a sense of the profession (Henkel, 2000, p. 158). Hanson (2009) also saw these areas as a fulcrum for professional identity, viewing the interactions of individuals with both others and their environment as key to the ways in which professional identities are formed. This constructivist view within the context of a sociocultural view of learning assumes that:

- Individual change is not separable from social change;
- Individual understanding is always distributed in its nature;
- Language only has meaning in the context of activity when words are being used in a particular way;
- People are agents in solving problems;
- Perception and action arise together and co-construct each other; and
- People act with the environment.

(Stevenson, 2004, quoted in The Open University, 2008, pp. 57–60; see also Bruner, 1997)

These largely complementary views on identity formation can be used to develop a congruent view of it, a postmodern, feminist view in which social influences combine agentive and innate individual elements to form an identity articulated by the individual. This is explored further in the next two sections.

The notion that professional identities are ‘discontinuous, fragmented and subject to change’ (Day, 2004, p. 40), that they are the products of multiple selves (Clandinin, 1986; Baxter, 2004; Beijaard et al., 2004), leaves the researcher with two key questions. Firstly, which identities residing within an individual are most important in creating and sustaining professional teaching identities? Secondly, can the personal subjectivities and fundamental beliefs of the individual prevent the creation of new ones, or prevent or hinder adaptation to a new teaching environment? If this is the case, then how can professional development overcome this: what constitutes effective professional development and learning in this context?

Summary

The information emanating from this section provides a robust basis for further investigation and leads to the first research question for the project.

1 What are teaching identities and how do they manifest?

The discussions within this section are summarised in Figure 2.1 below. It brings together the aspects of identity formation which, according to the literature reviewed so far, are perceived to have the greatest impact upon identity formation.

In order to articulate both the conceptual underpinning and the ways in which it will be used within the study, an in-depth discussion on these aspects along with ways in which it will inform data analysis is located within the next chapter.

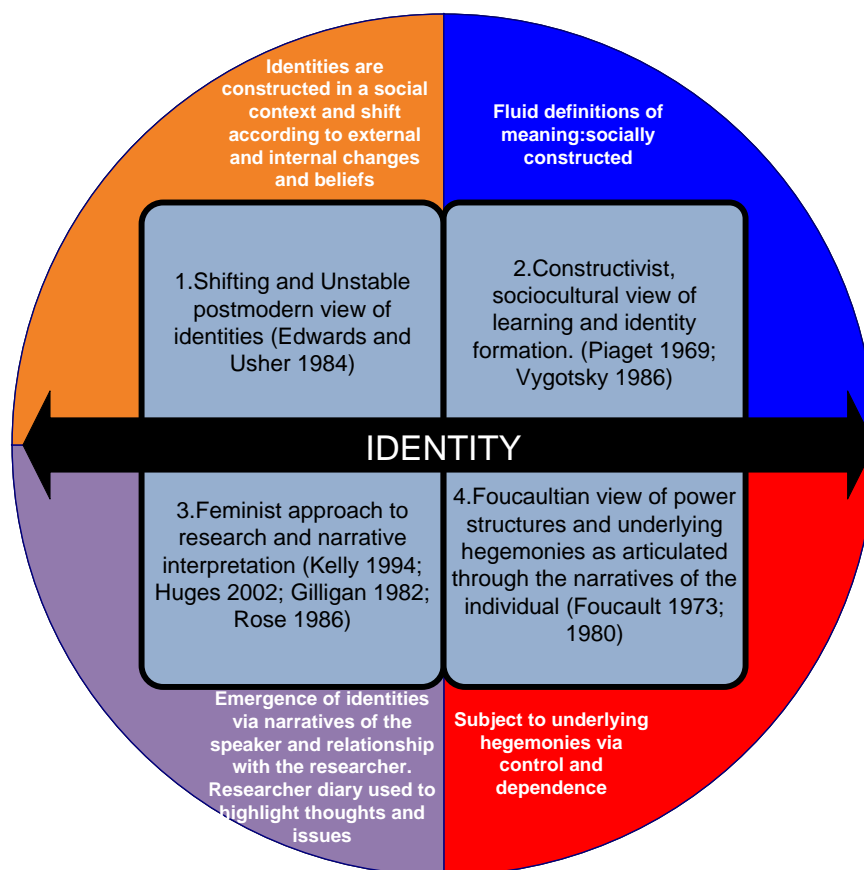


Figure 2.1 Framework for identity analysis

This section has also revealed the complexities inherent within the realm of identity research, and the underlying philosophical, political, social and psychological factors which colour the ways in which identity formation can be viewed. In exploring these elements it has also highlighted the need for exploration and discussion of elements which are influential in the formation and change of these identities. The following section explores the impact of these elements on

professional identities, with a view to investigation of their impact in the context of online teaching.

The changing nature of teaching identities: professional learning and the evolution of online teaching identities

As discussed earlier this section of the chapter emerges from literature that revealed the ways in which professional teaching identities change and discusses the extent to which professional learning affects these changes. It further explores the idea of professional identities as trajectories and explores key elements that emerged from the literature as being influential in their formation and evolution. It also addresses the ways in which individuals perceive their role and elements which emerge as differing forms of professional learning.

Communities of practice

If as the previous chapter revealed, learning is linked to identities and identities are formed through learning within communities of practice, this study needs to define to what extent being an associate lecturer at the OU can be seen as membership of a community of practice or whether an associate lecturer is part of a number of communities – each contributing to the sense of professional identity. It will also be necessary to define the ways in which an associate lecturer can become receptive to different learning opportunities available to them and which of these opportunities is key to the development and learning of professional online identities.

The concept of a community of practice refers to the 'process of social learning that occurs and shared socio cultural practices that emerge and evolve when people who have common goals interact as they strive towards those goals' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 21). The learner is also seen as complex and multidimensional. This constructivist approach not only acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner but encourages, utilises and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process (Wenger, 1998). The way in which the OU uses the MOODLE environment is based around the idea that learning is constructed within a learning community and that the role of teacher and learner is fluid in terms of the experiences that each bring to the learning environment.

Lave (1988) and later Lave and Wenger (1991), highlight fundamental elements within the processes of learning and gaining an identity within a particular community of practice. One in which the individual shifts from what they term to be a state of 'legitimate peripherality' – a relative outsider in terms of the skill or profession – to one in which they become a full member of a community of practice. This infers that they attain the status of master practitioner, able to influence the ways in which the community develops in the future. This ability to influence and shape the community emerges as key to the sustenance of their continued motivation (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 122; Baxter, 2004, p. 34).

In terms of this study, it will be important to ascertain not only whether lecturers feel part of a community of practice, but to what extent they feel agentive in its development. In terms of online teaching this will be fundamental to the development of a salient online teaching identity.

The OU via the MOODLE environment offers a number of communities of practice in which the lecturer can engage some learners online, some by telephone and some face to face. Kearsey's small-scale case study of OU associate lecturers' communities revealed that they saw themselves as belonging to only certain communities available to them, and although they identified with the OU community as a community of practice, some felt that their engagement was purely peripheral (Kearsey, 2007): that they were relative outsiders when compared to those staff based at Walton Hall or the regional and national offices.

The study also uncovered the fact that there was a certain measure of identification with some of the sub-communities that form part of the OU. One such community was the faculty community, within which were certain activities that afforded opportunities for what associate lecturers perceived to be 'central roles': roles traditionally performed by campus-based staff. This made them feel far more engaged with both their faculty and the University as a whole, and was particularly prevalent where they had been included in course development and involved in subject-specific research which had then been used and publicised by the University (either in print or online).

Research across the sector reveals the types of communities influential to the individual's sense of agency and being (Nixon, 1996, 1998; Hanson, 2009). Nixon was one of the first to note that the traditional collegiality of academic culture is in decline (1996, p. 18) and Hanson pointed out that 'the growing emphasis on performativity and accountability places more pressure on individuals to construct academic identities in line with corporate rather than disciplinary identities' (2009, p. 554). This has profound implications for the organisation: if individuals are under more pressure to construct their identities in line with organisational performance

indicators, then this tends to suggest that the institution is under more pressure to provide more development opportunities that permit this. This signals a distinct shift in emphasis from the idea of the autonomous academic able to construct their professional identity in relation to their subject area and outside of the university, to the notion of individuals who are tied much more into the institution. This point was made by Egerton and Halsey (1992b), who describe the impact of dominant managerialism on collegiate cooperation in the organisation of both teaching and research. He foresaw a future in which: 'Research endeavours would be increasingly applied to the requirements of government or industrial demands', the don becoming increasingly 'a salaried or piece work labourer in the service of an expanding middle class of administrators and technologists' (Egerton et al, 1992b, p. 1).

The aspect of collegiality is also important. Several studies have pointed up the way in which communication between peers can be the most effective way of forming and shaping practice in any discipline (Lave, 1988; Heron, 1989, 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999; Mezirow, 1991), raising awareness, providing different perspectives and questioning established forms of thinking (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Baxter, 2004). Investigating the ways in which collegiality plays out currently within the teaching and learning environment is an important element for investigation within this study. Inherent within this, the need to examine to what extent the organisation is promoting this type of collegiality and to what extent current development opportunities are effective in achieving this. This leads to the second and third key research questions to be explored during the study.

2 Is there evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment?

3 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?

Both Knight et al. (2005) and Kearsley (2007) looked at the different forms of professional development deemed relevant by associate lecturers, and particularly at the opportunities for the development of collegiality both within the subject specialism and on a cross-faculty basis. Table 2.1 shows the different contexts and communities that they identified as being part of the process of associate lecturer professional development at that particular time. The table illustrates whether the development is undertaken online or in a face-to-face context.

Table 2.1 Type of engagement

Type of engagement	Example
Online and face to face	Buddying and mentoring
Telephone and writing	Contribution to course development
Forums/face-to-face/telephone	Support and discussion with colleagues
Written/telephone/face-to-face	Monitoring correspondence tuition and dialogue around this
Face-to-face/online/telephone	Standardisation events/examination award board meetings
Online and face-to-face	Peer observation of teaching
Online and face-to-face	Formal courses
Online or face-to-face	Experience of being a student in the OU or other institution
Online/face-to-face	Conferences/giving papers/contributing to workshops/giving posters
Online	Creation of new groups on Facebook® or other social networking applications

Type of engagement	Example
Online	Sharing and creation of writing in cloud-based applications
Online	Student and tutor forums
Online/face-to-face	Tutorials and team teaching at day schools, via Elluminate® or Skype®
Online/mobile applications	Texting, online chat applications both within the context of the University and outside

Source: adapted and updated from Knight et al., 2005; Kearsley, 2007

Currently, within the OU, staff development is available from the 13 regional and national centres via a web-based portal called TutorHome. The portal acts as a gateway to the many different forms of development now available to associate lecturers. Resources take many and varied forms. From print-based resources (three booklets which outline the role and what you can expect from it) produced by the associate lecturer support and professional development department (Baxter et al., 2008; Coates et al., 2008), to a plethora of development material available both online and face to face within a regional and national context. Facets of the professional identity to which associate lecturers should aspire feature not only within print but also within the context of complementary online and audio visual resources. The resources key into several aspects perceived by Baxter et al. (2008, p. 22), all practising lecturers, to be vital elements to performing the role effectively:

- professional ethics
- action research
- reflective reading groups

- professional dialogue
- monitoring of correspondence tuition
- knowledge of online pedagogies
- group work techniques
- ability to foster discussion (online and face to face)
- feedback and feed forward techniques
- assessment methods
- effective group work strategies
- inclusivity and adherence to practices and values of equality of opportunity.

These link strongly with professional values, core knowledge and areas of activity that underpin the professional standards of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and are listed in Appendix 6 below. (Note: As of 2011, these are currently under consultation.) But although lecturers may ascribe to the professional values, core knowledge and areas of activity mentioned above, the reality of implementing them in an online environment may be challenging. The discussion below looks at ways in which lecturers have been encouraged to reflect upon practice and underpin future practice and pedagogies with the elements deemed by the HEA to describe professional competence.

The HEA places particular emphasis on professional reflection in the form of professional dialogue, action research and peer observation (Kuit et al., 2001). But emphasis on reflection as part of identity development is not shared by Wenger, who sees identity as 'a way of being in the world but not, in its essence, discursive or reflective' (1998, p. 151). But in order for an identity to be agential the individual must, to a certain extent, be able to form and shape it. Reflection is a core strategy within most professional fields and is highlighted in many contemporary theories of

learning (Illeris, 2009) as being the cornerstone of professional training and transformational learning programmes (Mezirow, 1991; Illeris, 2009). One of the questions for this study is to ask whether traditional, tried and tested forms of engendering professional reflection are transferable to the online environment.

Professional reflection and dialogue is most often associated with mentoring programmes in which the mentor's core function is to 'bridge discourses' (Heron 1999, p. 2). The ability of the mentor to support professional development is to a large extent dependent upon their ability to translate complex practices and approaches into a language that is understood by the mentee. This supports Lea's view (2005) that Wenger's model of communities of practice (1998) pays too little attention to the linguistic aspect of professional development, and as a result some learners may never move from the periphery of learning in a community of practice to mastership and concomitant centrality within that community. Lea's point about language is important and has profound implications for the formation of an online teaching identity. If access to and understanding of online discourses leads to swifter full engagement, then the role of a capable online mentor in attaining this is invaluable.

But bridging discourses between cultures, be they academic, linguistic or social, can often feel more like burning bridges rather than building them, leading to a *nolens volens* (willing or not) type of attitude which can be detrimental to the change management process (Kotter, 1995). If change is pressed too urgently upon individuals or not articulated in ways which align with the individual's core approach, then resistance can result. In order to overcome this, it is necessary to look at what forms of professional learning effectively embed key elements of learning without inadvertently alienating an already fearful individual.

The discussion above reveals the centrality of language in identity work both in terms of accessibility to new discourses and in terms of the ways in which individuals are able to express new identities, articulate them and narrativise them in the context of new roles. The discussion which follows examines the ways in which language forms and shapes new identities and constitutes a core element of professional learning.

The role of language in identity formation

There is an inherent assumption that teachers, having learned to teach in a face-to-face environment that enabled them to articulate their identities and manage student learning, should be able to transform this innate knowledge to the online environment. The discussion above has demonstrated that this may be an assumption as naïve as the outmoded thought that knowledge of a subject automatically imbues the individual with a natural capacity to teach it. Some institutions are aware of this and are introducing innovative online mentoring programmes. One such project, The COOLAIDE Project based at the University of Hull, has identified the beginnings of a basic toolkit for online interactions which offers a number of phrases to mediate communication in the online environment (Bennett and Lee, 2010). But the use of single phrases, while useful as a starting point, has no power within language learning to permeate the deeper affective elements of communication in another language. A phrasebook may be useful for basic communication in another tongue but does not provide the type of interaction that permeates the linguistic and cultural identity (Baxter, 2004). Many courses and books have set out useful techniques for moderators and those using asynchronous forms of communication with students (e.g. Elluminate® and Blackboard®), but work is needed in metacommunicative competence, or the

ability to intervene within difficult online interactions in a constructive way. This primarily needs to raise awareness of the impact that textual self-representations online may have on teaching. Salmon, using Maslow's hierarchy of needs to outline the affective, cognitive and situative elements of online working, has written extensively on the stages of online competence (Salmon, 2002, p. 37). And Macdonald and McLeod (2007), in devising an online moderating course which placed lecturers in the role of online students, were able to observe an experienced moderator at work and at the same time experience how a student may feel in this environment. While the approach appears to have had an impact, the role of language in the textual articulation of identity was largely negated. There was also little indication of the ways in which online language can circumvent the lack of paralinguistic and prosodic clues (tone, pitch, and accent).

Research into teacher training and teaching identities has revealed the role of metaphor to be influential in changing minds and permeating identities at a deep level. Employed to connect tacit knowledge with ethical and ideological positions (Bowers, 1980), metaphor has the potential to enrich dialogue in ways that other types of conversational tools may not have the power to do. Creating a deeper level of consciousness that links the right and the left side of the brain, provides a holistic approach to the multifaceted dilemmas that the online teacher experiences during the course of a teaching session (Barker, 1985; OECD, 2002; Patterson, 2002). The metaphor also has the power to reveal the philosophical elements incurred within the business of teaching, and can prove revelatory in terms of probing and concomitantly addressing the core ethical beliefs and underlying hegemonies that dictate the ways in which individuals act as they do.

In the field of cognitive linguistics, the conceptual metaphor is seen by some to be key to the creation of a feeling of being at home within a community. Researchers in this field argue that unless this feeling is engendered the community will never achieve the cohesion necessary for members to feel comfortable within it. This thought is particularly prevalent in the work of Wilson (1979). The discussion earlier in this chapter revealed the ethical implications of working online to be a key element to professional salience. The metaphor creates this textual link, a link that is not often explicitly explored within the context of online professional development.

Crystal's exploration of the internet from a linguistic perspective (2006) echoes this assertion that internet users are continually searching for vocabulary to describe their experiences 'to capture the character of the online world: to overcome the communicative limitations of its technology' (p. 152). He also notes that in the online forum or chat group, members accommodate each other, developing a shared linguistic character. But his research indicates that this can be short-lived, 'a particular locution being taken up as a fad by several members and used intensively before it dies away' (ibid.). This kind of linguistic one-upmanship is also a feature of online chat rooms (Giles et al., 1991) and can lead to flaming or aggressive posting. The same research revealed that more than half of the students interviewed expressed concern about the image that they were projecting (p. 4) and confessed that they felt deep and concerning levels of vulnerability and even shame at having projected a textual image of themselves, which they later felt to be inappropriate (p. 10). The study also revealed that the disadvantages of online interaction identified by students tended to relate to affective issues rather than cognitive challenges inherent within the subject.

Kelly-Hall's work on interactional sociolinguistics takes this further revealing that individuals enter into communicative activities with others as 'cooperative agents' (1993, p. 39) and that an important part of any textual or vocal interchange are the cues that individuals use to signal the interactional context in which the sign is being used. In the context of online forums this is particularly interesting, as misappropriation of linguistic cues within the face-to-face environment can be overcome via the use of body language and enhanced paralinguistic devices such as intonation, pauses, facial expressions and the rhythm and cadence of the interaction. In the online environment, the ways in which to overcome these issues have not, as Crystal (2006) points out, been fully explored.

In the context of professional development, learning which integrates psychological approaches to online interaction with heightened awareness of linguistic devices that promote online collaboration, provided this is accompanied by a clear rationale and metacognitive explanation of what this can achieve, may offer the online teacher a greater degree of control in terms of their online interactions. It may offer the online teacher the means by which to better convey their online identity and avoid the feelings of shame and embarrassment outlined above, which may have such a detrimental effect on online teaching and learning.

Bauman's definition of language from a sociocultural perspective sums up the complex ways in which online identities take from the individual's social and cultural repertoire, and articulated and narrativised

Individual identity is the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources

and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others.

(Bauman, 2007, p. 1)

The adaptation of this in terms of a predominantly text-based environment, conjures up just how great a challenge is faced in translating this into an online environment. So far, much emphasis has been put on the translation of existing teaching to online working – in this case interpreting may well be a more effective metaphor – implying not only the activity but the conveying of semantic meaning and articulations of identity in an accessible and easily rendered manner.

The discussion above has indicated that although there are some advances in this area a lack of linguistic and affective awareness of what is being played out online often leaves the online teacher feeling powerless. When online interactions go badly wrong or online identities are misunderstood, there is potential for both student and teacher to become metaphorically stuck in their practices: unable to move on and teach effectively. This element of online interaction is particularly important if online education is to attain a truly global reach, as cross-cultural interaction presents an even greater linguistic challenge for the online lecturer. Although textual articulation of identity is clearly very important to the ways in which lecturers feel about teaching online, research into this element is still in its infancy. As Crystal (2006) points out 'once proper descriptive work has been done, online forums and chat rooms will emerge as a distinct variety of language' (p. 156).

This section has emphasised the role of language in both the textual articulation of online identity and the ways in which language represents a core element and tool

within professional learning and identity work. But what of the other aspects of face-to-face teaching that present challenges in the online environment? One such aspect to emerge from the literature is what part the body plays in online work: the extent to which the teacher's body is an integral part of their teaching and class management technique (Freedman and Stoddart Holmes, 2003). The following section looks at these attributes in light of online teaching and examines ways in which online teaching is translating them in the online environment.

Embodiment and teacher presence in the online environment

The primacy of physical embodiment within an environment, whether it be gaming, business or education, has led to the creation of online learning worlds in which teachers and students alike are represented by avatars: virtual people who are created by the individuals as 'visual representations of users' (Sheehy et al., 2009, p. 2). Early research on the role of the teacher's body (see e.g. Freedman and Stoddart Holmes's work on embodiment, authority and identity in the academy (2003)) identifies the centrality of the teachers' body, not only in terms of the student, but also in terms of the teacher's experience and how the physical embodiment of the teacher impacts on classroom dynamics. Our bodies are important to us and phenomenological research has identified the role of the body as 'our own personal project' (Merleau-Ponty, 1942, p. 5), our interface with the world. To negate this within the teaching context, is to create a type of Cartesian mind-body split that is inimical to much of what we know to date about successful teaching and any phenomenological approach to teacher identity (Husserl, 1931, 1970). But how can professional development help higher education teachers to develop an online presence that equates with the ideal of the charismatic and effective face-to-face teacher, avoiding the anonymity and impersonality so often

associated with life on the web? What devices are available to the online teacher to permit them to articulate their enthusiasm and act as a positive role model for their students? The discussion that follows examines this aspect of teaching in light of current research.

An increasing number of OU courses are replacing traditional textbooks and study guides with online versions which use a number of tools that attempt to emulate facets of the face-to-face teacher/student relationship in an online environment. For example, a quiz tool, which provides the opportunity for online question and answer sessions that are pre-programmed to deliver answers and alternatives to a set of pre-formed questions, and online automatic feedback, which draws from set scripts to offer feedback on assessment tasks. It could be argued that these tools merely complement the teaching role, but the fact that they are built into the online course and study guide in effect means that they assume psychological centrality in quite a different way to print-based materials in the examples above, actually replacing a facet of the lecturer role. This interface centrality has been remarked upon by a number of authors researching in the realm of online teaching and learning (Turtle, 1993; Sheehy et al., 2009). A centrality that may, to the student, appear to operate quasi-autonomously from the lecturer and be perceived as detrimental to teacher creativity by the teachers themselves, a facet also noted by Hanson (2009) in her study on e-identities.

But any curriculum is multidimensional in nature; any effective curriculum seeks to permeate the consciousness of the individual at a deep and holistic level, as illustrated by Figure 2.2 below. The figure shows that the formal or advertised curriculum represents, in learning terms, only one-third of what is actually learned during the course of study. The remaining two areas within the diagram represent

perspectives gleaned during the more informal interactions occurring within the learning environment. The extent to which the online environment can replicate this is an interesting question to ponder. Taking a broad view of the types of tools for global engagement available online, it may be that in terms of the informal curriculum, potential for exploration may well be almost unlimited. The power of the online environment to engage the learner in terms of the hidden curriculum, too, may be untapped in situational terms. If online engagement broadens the reach of education, then its transformational element is equally plenipotentiary.

Culturally, too, the implications could well be profound in terms of existing projects, for example, in reaching out to those who would otherwise be unable to access learning, the TESSA initiative³ has already had considerable impact on a sociological and economic scale. But do lecturers perceive the potentiality of such engagement and feel able to articulate it in their day-to-day work, or is there a perceptual gap between the utopian rhetoric and the operational elements engendered within this particular aspect of higher education teaching?

³ TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub Saharan Africa Project),

http://www.open.ac.uk/africa/tessa_project.shtml A project designed to reach out to teachers in remote locations, offering a comprehensive programme of teacher training and development via laptops and other forms of mobile learning.

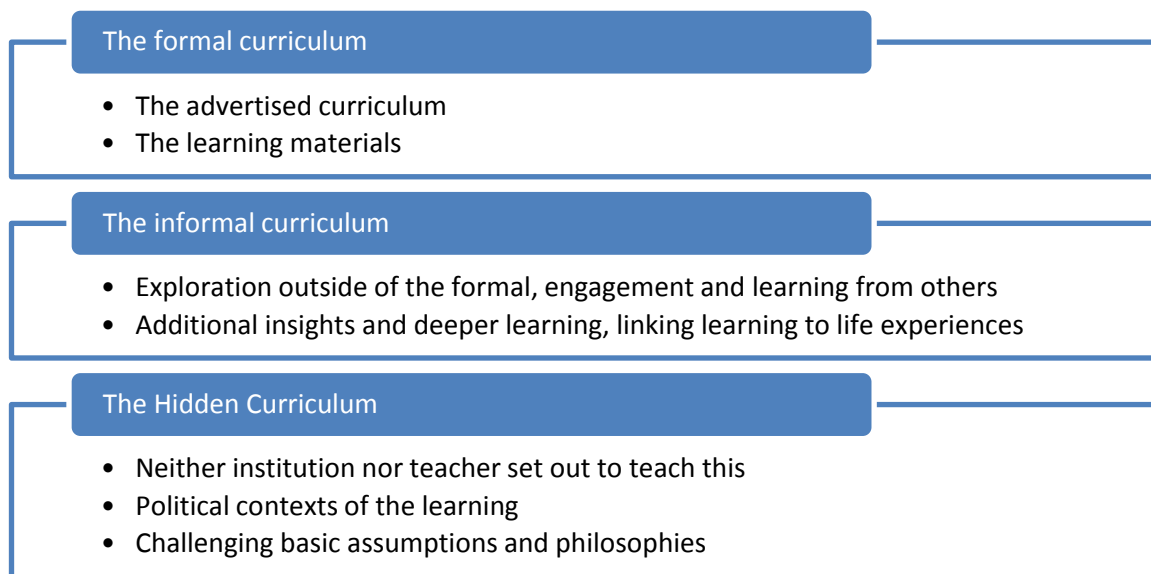


Figure 2.2 The three types of curriculum (Source: adapted from Armitage et al., 1999)

In the context of the OU the online web-based study guide or calendar is the public interface between the student, the University and the tutor. Online tutorials appear as links, accessed from the central interface, tutors are linked-in via tutor group forums, module forums and chat rooms, and tutorials appear linked to particular weeks and available via asynchronous tools such as Elluminate®. This centrality of online material is a key element in terms of the new ways in which the online teacher must now perceive themselves and their role: a role in which they must simultaneously manipulate the new technologies and seamlessly integrate with them – melding the two in order to provide an integrated learning experience offered by the University to the student. But teacher presence remains key to a positive online learning experience (Sheehy et al., 2009). The student still needs a learning relationship with the tutor and the tutor needs that relationship in order to sustain their professional identity and to feel a measure of job satisfaction (Baxter, 2004; Sheehy et al., 2009). So what is a powerful online presence and how does the online teacher learn to create it?

The idea of an online presence has been described as the 'the perceptual illusion of non-mediation' (Sheehy et al., 2009, p. 22) and can be further defined as what happens when people using a communication environment use their normal perceptual, cognitive and affective systems to respond to the environment and project a mental model of themselves inside the virtual world.

Virtual worlds (including learning environments) such as Second Life® place presence as central to the social function, viewing it as a vital component, engendering group collaboration and cooperation. If teaching is going to be successful within the online environment, then the dependencies listed below apply equally to teacher and learner:

- 1 Comfortable using the hardware.
- 2 An ability to manipulate online tools to enhance learning.
- 3 The feeling that they are able to articulate their personalities online.
- 4 Willingness to share good practices: hints and tips. To influence and be influenced by others.
- 5 Positive cathexis: the ability to deal with subjects outside of the self.

These online conditions are not dissimilar to the framework proposed by Salmon (2002) discussed in the previous section, which offered an adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and described the stages in which physiological and emotional needs had to be met in order for maximum learning potential to be reached.

Salmon's framework adopted a grass-roots approach to online teaching, beginning with the need for online teachers to be happy with the equipment and practical elements, before being able to move on and attain a measure of psychological

security and safety within the environment. Only then did she feel that lecturers were able to self-actualise or attain their highest potential in the field of online teaching. As outlined earlier, the Salmon framework concentrated largely on the skills and attributes needed for online teaching rather than on how individuals went about creating and maintaining online identities. In the list above, points 3 and 4 emphasise the need for individuals to create a salient online identity before feeling comfortable enough to share information and help others. This is an important point which also appeared earlier in the discussion on communities of practice.

Within the context of point 4, the inducibility factor – the willingness to be influenced and to influence other learners – is important in an online context in which the ways of influencing learners differ from those in a face-to-face environment, with text and synchronous tools replacing one of the most powerful teaching tools: body language. A number of researchers within the fields of psychology and education have noted the importance of body language within the teaching and influencing professions (Day, 2004). It has been highlighted widely within the field of behaviour management and is a key element within many communication, management and teaching development programmes. The loss of this important element, said to make up some 65–80% of communicative interaction, represents the loss of a fundamental component within teaching identity. Trying to find ways to replace body language are questions which currently exercise researchers in the field (Freedman et al 2003).

Point 5 in the list above deals with ‘positive cathexis’: the transference from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred one. New teachers working in a traditional face-to-face teaching environment are thought to take around 18 months before they can focus on the student rather than on their own teaching performance (Minton, 1991). Although many lecturers with the OU are

experienced in face-to-face teaching and may well have moved on from this stage, it is interesting to consider whether online interactions provoke regression in their teaching development: whether the preoccupation with creating an online presence and identity return them to the state of feeling like a new teacher once again.

The skills and competencies pointed out in the list could apply equally to both student and teacher, particularly in the online environment, where hierarchies tend to be flatter and the teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a didactic expert of the traditional lecture theatre or tutorial. Examining the types of tools that the online teacher has at their disposal, it is possible to analyse not only the potential for the psychological articulation of teacher presence but also the likely difficulties and concomitant opportunities for professional learning.

Creating an online identity through a blended medium is said to comprise two activities: the act of using the medium (whatever this may be), and the act of consciously creating the online identity (Joinson et al., 2007). In terms of the forums, wikis and blogs (and to a certain extent, email and text chat), this tends to suggest that the online teacher may have many more strategies with which to 'construct' a professional identity than those open to them in a face-to-face situation. The 'act' of replying to someone in an email (privately) may give the online teacher the opportunity to create a more personal relationship and therefore a different identity to that of a higher education teacher speaking at a forum to over 3000 students. And this opportunity could be extended further, bringing yet another dimension to the construction of professional identities: for example, using social networking tools such as Facebook® might allow the existing and professional identities of participants to meld.

As discussed earlier, the opportunity to 'play' in the online environment is very important in order for growth to take place, enabling the lecturer to feel empowered enough to be able to develop within the environment. But is the professional identity able to be consistent within the different environments? Is it important that there is consistency? Can the formality of the lecture theatre, the facilitative environment of the tutorial and the more intimate environment of supervision be emulated online? Tools available to the online lecturer are many and varied, ranging from whole course forums, to tutor group forums, to chat room forums. Some of these groups may contain as many as 4000 students and would normally be moderated by an experienced lecturer. Tutor group forums are designed for teachers to interact with their tutor groups only, and these groups would normally contain a maximum of 25 students.. A café forum is different again, providing a large, normally unmoderated place for students to socialise. Synchronous communication tools such as Elluminate® attempt to emulate the classroom situation, allowing tutors to communicate with their students in real time using an instant chat facility.

Wikis and blogs are purely text-based applications which permit teachers and students to interact on a variety of subjects. At the moment they are purely text-based, although future development may see the use of video applications, too. Add to this complex array of tools the odd day school and use of the telephone (or Skype®-type application) and the new online lecturer is faced with a plethora of communication channels each with its own particular requisites and limitations. Speaking on a course forum to around 3000 students may require a radically different articulation and narrative to that portrayed within, say, the context of a private email or text chat over Elluminate®. The ways in which teachers negotiate

these channels has been explored in a project based at the OU. The project examined the viewpoints of individuals who were using virtual identities in their professional roles, mainly within the context of Second Life®, a programme in which the teacher is embodied using an avatar (Peachy, in Sheehy et al., 2009).⁴

Within this programme the teacher is embodied within their avatar, so first impressions may offer a psychological predictor of identity based on a reflection embodied by the avatar, whose physical appearance will in itself be a pictorial articulation of their narrative identity. The research revealed interesting examples of teachers who felt more confident when customising the appearance of an avatar, than they did in a real-life situation. Revealingly, in situations in which the same individuals had to choose an 'off the peg' version to represent them, they felt far less effective as a result (Peachy, quoted in Sheehy et al., 2009, p. 34).

Information gained from interviews carried out with individuals new to using avatars revealed that they valued the ability to be able to use gesture and body language in their interactions with others. Some respondents said that they felt much more confident within their personal lives due to the opportunities afforded to them by their online identities, some even going so far as creating whole social networking profiles around their teaching avatar identity and becoming, as a result, 'less isolated and insular' within their practices.

The discussion above offers valuable insights into what motivates individuals when using the medium of an avatar to teach, while also revealing potential issues

⁴ Second Life is an online environment within which students and teachers may meet for tutorial purposes. In order to participate in the environment, one must first create an avatar, an online representation of the self, via which all interactions are carried out.

engendered by the prospect of using many different channels of communication, each one with its own inherent student expectations. In order to teach effectively, the lecturer must be able to create a presence that represents the sum of their teaching communications within each medium, so that they can emulate the type of communication that they would have with students in a face-to-face environment.

Summary

The discussions within this section illustrate the depth of the multifaceted nature of teaching identities and how they are evolving and changing to accommodate the online environment. They also raise issues on the ways in which language, embodiment and a sense of community affect how lecturers teach (and learn) online. In so doing they provide direction for the on-going research and elicit research questions 2 and 3.

- 2 Is there evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment?**
- 3 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?**

The following section looks at how the challenges outlined above may be addressed by professional learning and what forms this may take in order to be most effective in contributing to the formation of salient online teaching identities.

Preparing for new teaching roles: effecting change

A framework for professional learning

Many frameworks for professional learning centre around the notion that professional learning is intrinsically linked to change: change in practice, attitudes and, concomitantly, identities (Banks and Shelton Mayes, 2001; Illeris, 2009). Learning about learning and the ways in which learning takes place is important in order to sustain motivation and to be able to identify what impact the learning has had on professional practice. But in order to learn, it is first necessary to be receptive to learning. The importance of receptivity has often been highlighted in a cultural anthropological context by a number of researchers in the fields of education and social anthropology (Maclure, 1993a; Wenger, 2006). Gregoriou makes the point that salient identities are formed specifically by the amount of 'otherness' that we can take on board and synthesise into our pedagogical communication with other individuals (Gregoriou, 2001, quoted in Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne, 2001, p. 134). In terms of a 'virtual learning environment'⁵ (VLE) this has a number of implications both in the way in which receptivity to otherness can be encouraged and in locating the place where discourses meet and merge, the place where we can learn from each other. Derrida (1981) refers to this place as 'the contact zone' (p. 45) while Alsup (2006) calls it 'the meeting place for "borderland discourse"' (p. 3). Wenger (2006) argues that rejecting new identities is a form of apathy but resistance to change is often rooted in fear, too. In order for

⁵ An environment within which a variety of pedagogical tools are offered online. In the case of The Open University, these are sited on a course website, a website which provides a central point for all learning activities and online discussion forums.

professional development to be effective, we not only need to offer development opportunities but also need to work on ways in which to engage the associate lecturer with the experience: to overcome the fear and resistance to change. The need to reflect on the learning situation in order to progress is inculcated into most theories of learning (Mezirow, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Heron, 1999). But, as discussed earlier, professional reflection is a complex and emotive topic that has been explored by many (Schön, 1983; Wenger, 1998; Heron, 1999) and is not always easy to engender within the working environment. The ways in which professional reflection are articulated and facilitated within the higher education setting are addressed in the discussion which follows.

The fostering of creativity, the notion of academic freedom and the opportunity to evolve pedagogies and practices is central to the fundamentals upon which higher education was created (Coffield, 1997; Coffield and Williamson, 1997; Beshar and Trowler, 2001). But in any creative endeavour there is a need for professional 'safe spaces': the metaphysical 'studio' or workshop; a place where discourses meet and where new ideas are explored, an environment where change is not viewed as a threat but a powerful tool for development of practice. How this is achieved at present, and how it can be sustained and developed within the online environment, is a pressing issue for the future of a higher education looking to online teaching as a way of extending its reach, widening participation and appealing to a generation that has grown to accept online interactions as a normal and important part of their lives.

Heron (1989, 1992, 1999) has proposed a model by which fear and resistance can be effectively countered by mentoring, peer support and creative visualisation. Employing this model proved effective in situations in which attitudes and

hegemonies needed to be addressed as part of the change process. The model assumes the Socratic notion that in order for change to take place people must be encouraged to confront their own assumptions and hegemonies. Originally employed in the fields of politics and counselling, it has been used primarily in situations where the need for change was being countered by resistance and fear. The model proposes an approach to change which sees individuals as agentive and capable of creating their own change realities, adapting this change to formulate a syncretism of their own style. In terms of online teaching: taking inchoate online pedagogies and developing them according to their principles and beliefs in this form of learning.

But in order to construct a framework for professional learning it is vital to consider elements upon which tutors reflect. Or perhaps a more important aspect for this study lies within the question: what should an effective tutor reflect upon? Teacher knowledge has been recognised by a number of researchers as being difficult to quantify (Maclure, 1993b; Banks et al 2001). A study carried out by Bell and colleagues (Bell, 2001) looking into the various elements of the reflective practices of online tutors, identified four principal areas of professional reflection: technical, practical, critical and unknown. They analysed a sample of tutors in terms of what areas they reflected upon most. Taking the contents of 20 written statements, they broke down the types of reflection as follows:

- a) Technical reflections (overheads, online, teaching tools) 26%
- b) Practical reflections (interactions with students, discussion, feedback) 36%
- c) Critical reflections (learning from other professionals, learning from students) 33%
- d) Unknown (areas not covered by the above) 5%.

This also concurs with Figure 1.1 (see Chapter 1) in which the three views of teaching, practical, cognitive and situational, engender the use of certain skills and activities which make the teaching and learning experience effective and enjoyable – for both teacher and student. Professional reflection and tools for professional reflection have been, and continue to be, the subject of a good deal of research within the context not only of higher education, but also of the wider public sector, business and the professions (Maclure, 1993a; Banks et al 2001; Leach and Moon, 2008).

Both the HEA and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) place particular emphasis on professional reflection. As has already been discussed, it is key to the learning and integration of new professional identities.

One of the most widely used tools within secondary education, and one used widely within face-to-face higher education teaching situations, is ‘Peer observation of teaching’ (Gosling, 2005a). Gosling’s extensive work and literature review into peer observation of teaching proposed a four-stage model. This has been integrated into a coaching model proposed by Heron (1989) in order to provide a model of professional learning and dialogue to be used within this study.

Within the online environment, peer observation of teaching would need to take place within the context of either the synchronous tutorial (using tools such as Elluminate®, Blackboard® or Second Life®) or, alternatively, online discussion forums). Drawbacks in the process are identified within a face-to-face environment by Cosh (1998), Gibbs and Coffey (2001) and Gosling (2005a), and included

issues of 'cosiness' (Gosling, 2005b), the sense of the conversation lacking rigour and a true sense of development or moving practice on. This has also been noted within a number of studies on mentoring (Brooks and Sikes, 1997; Butcher, 2001). Other elements considered problematic include inconsistency, lack of follow-up, issues of power and agency, and cognitive lack of understanding of what the process set out to achieve. The Heron model adapted below (Figure 2.3) has the capacity to overcome this, setting out a clear direction for online mentoring, clear to both observer and observed. This format also has the advantage of clarifying what the exercise needs to achieve while also confronting any misconceptions or preconceptions surrounding the task.

On a broader scale the framework can also be used to examine current effective practices and concomitant gaps in provision, as perceived by lecturers themselves. It offers potentialities for data analysis within the research, for example, it could be used when analysing the interrelationship between the three areas in terms of deep engagement and for transformational learning within different development opportunities and learning situations (Mezirow, 1991; Heron, 1999). In terms of the literature review so far, it is congruent with the postmodern, narrative, feminist view of identity formation.

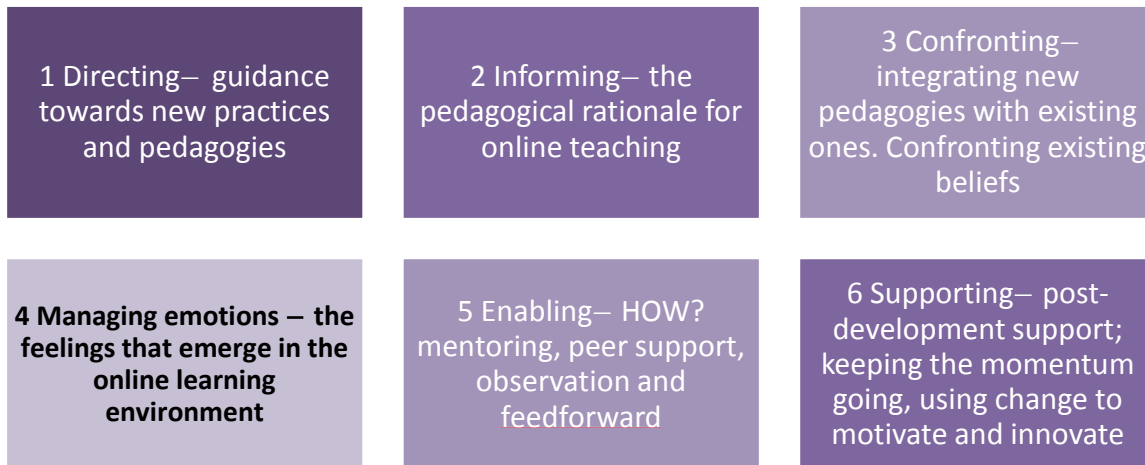


Figure 2.3 Framework for professional learning (Source: adapted from Heron, 1999)

Figure 2.3 shows several key strands that outline the facilitative process implied within the development of new identities and the interwoven framework for professional learning.

One of the key elements within the research of peer observation of teaching and peer reflection has been the perceived lack of a framework (Stevenson, 2006). If both parties were privy to this framework, then any perceived unequal power relationship may be diminished and the resultant meeting between the two parties concomitantly more productive (Stevenson, 2006). Just as in the need for metacognitive approaches within online material development, use of metacognitive approaches to online professional dialogue may go some way to dealing with unrealistic expectations and articulate the professional relationship in a way that is understood by both parties. Online observation may be thought of as more gruelling than its counterpart in the face-to-face environment, lacking the paralinguistic cues outlined earlier in the chapter. The facilitative framework

developed by Heron (1999) has been used very successfully to combat negative emotions and defensiveness that can be engendered by this genre of professional learning, and noted by a number of researchers in the field of face-to-face peer observation (Heron, 1998, 2001).

The discussion in this section so far has focused on effecting changes within individuals, but an important part of the EdD is its impact on professional practice. So, the final part of the section will concentrate on the ways in which insights and professional observations are currently being implemented within the organisation. It takes the model of change management currently being used by the OU to transform both teaching and organisation to a fully online function and considers to what extent the organisation is attaining its goals. In terms of this study it then focuses on areas of professional development that may be impeding teaching progress in this important area.

Implementing change

Most theories of change management (Lewin, 1939; Kotter, 1995) argue that the more people are involved in change the more likely they are to buy into it. Based on a study of 100 companies, Kotter (1995) developed an eight-step model for successful change (see Figure 2.4 below).

Applying these eight steps to the higher education sector as well as the OU, Figure 2.4 demonstrates that people making up the 'early majority' category, are happy to go along with change provided that the 'early adopters' or 'guiding coalition' make a good enough case for it. This idea is well recognised within the helping professions, in which counselling and intervention techniques seek to

move people forward via processes wherein the individual is encouraged to explore positive aspects of any change in attitude or habit (De Board, 1998; Heron, 1998, 1999, 2001). It is also a commonly used strategy within the field of international political facilitation, in which two or more parties are encouraged, via processes of questioning and exploration, to explore potentialities for mutual collaboration (Heron, 1999).

However, in Kotter's estimation, some 16% of people will generally resist changes because of either fear or a feeling that the changes have been imposed from above and because they consider that the changes will not necessarily provide any benefits to either student or lecturer. Kotter's eight-step model for successful change provides a framework aimed at overcoming innate resistance (Figure 2.4). These areas have, to a certain extent, emerged within the context of the literature review so far, but viewing them as a staged model is useful not only in terms of this research but also in terms of its aim to make a professional contribution to the field. As was mentioned earlier, the impact of new technologies in higher education is creating a situation in which staff are looking to the organisation to provide induction and on-going development in new technologies. Consequently, the information provided by Figure 2.4 will be important in terms of any conclusions that can be drawn from the research and which directly relate to any overall strategic implementation of development that is offered by the educational organisation or sector.

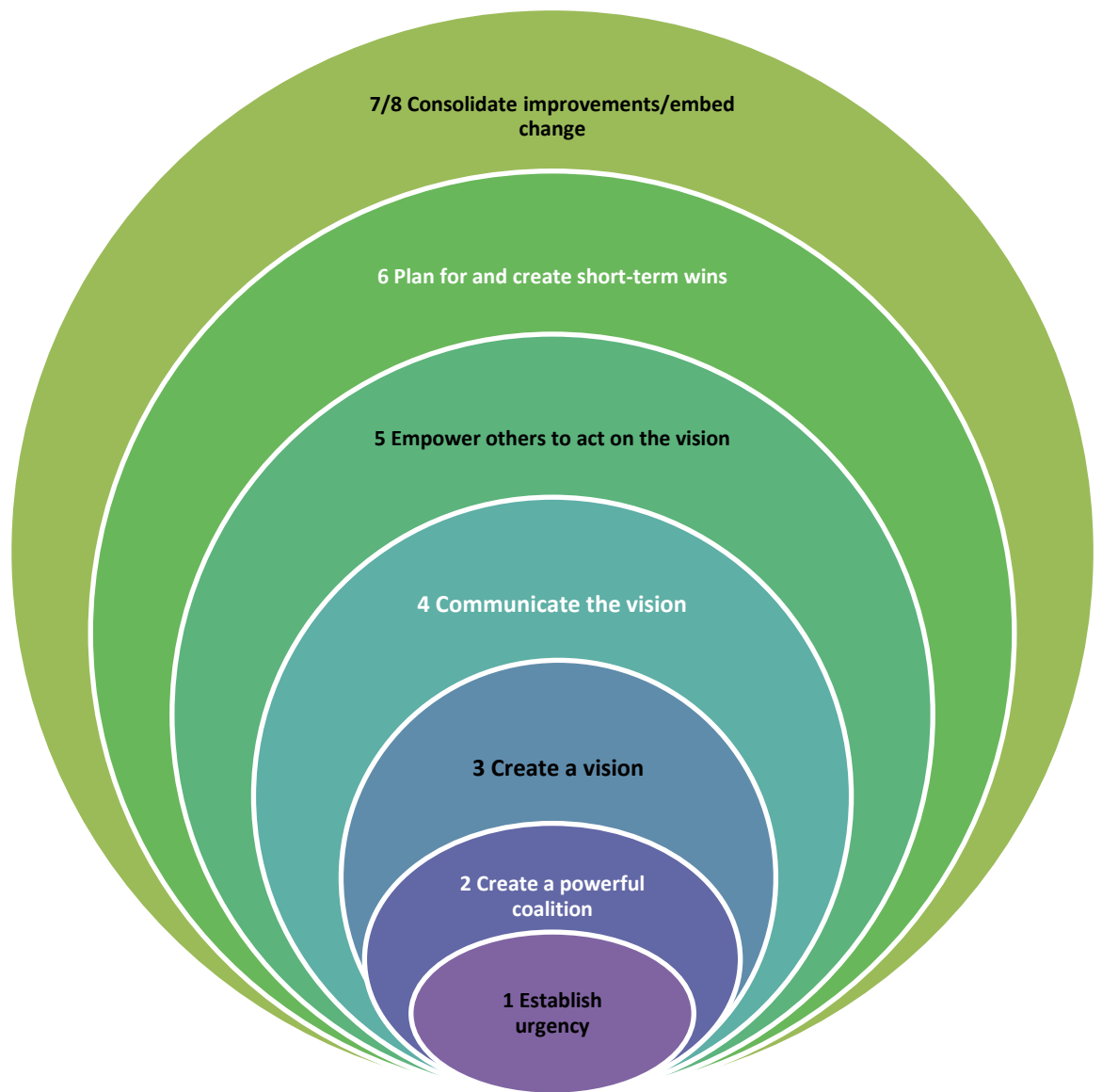


Figure 2.4 Kotter's eight steps to effective change management (Source: adapted from Kotter, 1995)

Many recent papers on the subject (see, for example, Churchman and King, 2009; Hanson, 2009) tend to imply that in the eyes of the higher education teacher, there is still a feeling of separation between online tools and core knowledge. The tools are still considered in many cases as being an 'add-on' to the teaching, and not as being embedded as core within pedagogies. There are also issues around how far these new tools are designed to benefit the student, rather than providing the institution with a cost-effective way to deliver global courses to a wider audience (Churchman and King, 2009). This would tend to suggest not only that there are

issues around the type of professional learning needed to make a profound impact on practice, but also that there may be implications in terms of Figure 2.4, and the ways in which both sector and individual university are addressing the need for change.

Summary

This section has analysed ways in which changes may be implemented within the context of the case study and, more broadly, across the sector. As a result, it has identified a 'framework for change implementation' (Figure 2.4) which can be employed in the concluding chapter (Chapter 6), where it can be used to identify ways in which change to greater online engagement is being implemented across the institution. Together with the two previous sections, this section has raised some key questions for the study as well as adding to the two important frameworks to be employed within both data analysis (Chapter 4) and the concluding chapter: the first, an original 'framework for identity analysis' (Figure 2.1); the second, a 'framework for professional learning' (Figure 2.3). The latter framework complements the former by addressing the final research questions raised within this section.

- 4 What professional learning have teaching staff experienced that has contributed to their feelings of professional effectiveness in an online role?**
- 5 How can the above be used to inform professional learning of part-time higher education teachers working within a VLE based upon the principles of social constructivism?**

Literature review: conclusion and summary

As the introduction to this chapter reflects, research into this subject is timely from a higher education sector-wide perspective. The pace of change has increased not only because of the economic impetus but also in response to an increasingly techno-friendly student body. The literature review recognises from an educational, political, economic and social perspective the importance of ensuring that good practice and research in this area are readily available to practitioners. The literature has highlighted that while the underlying principles behind teaching online remain, in some ways, the same as in a face-to-face situation, the skills and competencies and feelings, both ethical and in terms of self-salience, associated with the experience are substantially different.

The review has provided a strong conceptual framework for the investigation of teaching identities and the need to integrate this into the methodology. It has identified the key research questions for the study and, within these, elements that have emerged within the literature as being influential on identities and therefore worthy of further exploration. In addition, the discussions reveal that there is still a pedagogical gap to be bridged between new teaching tools and existing pedagogies and understandings of what it means to be a higher education teacher. The review also implied the need for a greater degree of institutional responsibility for professional learning and development of online teacher identities, raising questions not only of what is offered, but also by whom.

Throughout the literature review, a key strand for development and exploration is the idea of teacher presence. Articulated primarily in the context of the written

word, the literature revealed difficulties in this area, synchronically emerging within the context of those using avatars for teaching and learning. The discussion of embodiment raises further questions on how to achieve the equivalent in online text-based environments and on the need for further exploration of text-based identity articulation.

The review also highlighted areas of further exploration in terms of the management of online learning environments, and the use of metaphor to create an intrinsic link between practical strategies and inherent ethical stances and beliefs. Part of this discussion keys into the earlier section on change management and the role of communication in creating both a realistic and an optimistic view of the future; bringing this down to a micro level, it offers a picture of the depth needed within the change management strategy of both organisation and sector.

This review began by exploring ways in which identities can be defined and recognised, and concluded with the research question which focuses on the nature of teaching identities. The research questions emerging from the review are as follows.

The nature of teaching identities

- 1 What are teaching identities and how do they manifest?

The changing nature of teaching identities

- 2 Is there evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment?

Preparing for a new teaching role

- 3 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?

Supporting teaching in the new role

- 4 What professional learning have teaching staff experienced that has contributed to their feelings of professional effectiveness in an online role?

Lessons for the higher education institution

- 5 How can the above be used to inform professional learning of part-time higher education teachers working within a VLE based upon the principles of social constructivism?

The ways in which the three frameworks outlined in the previous section are to be used in the study are outlined in Figure 2.5.

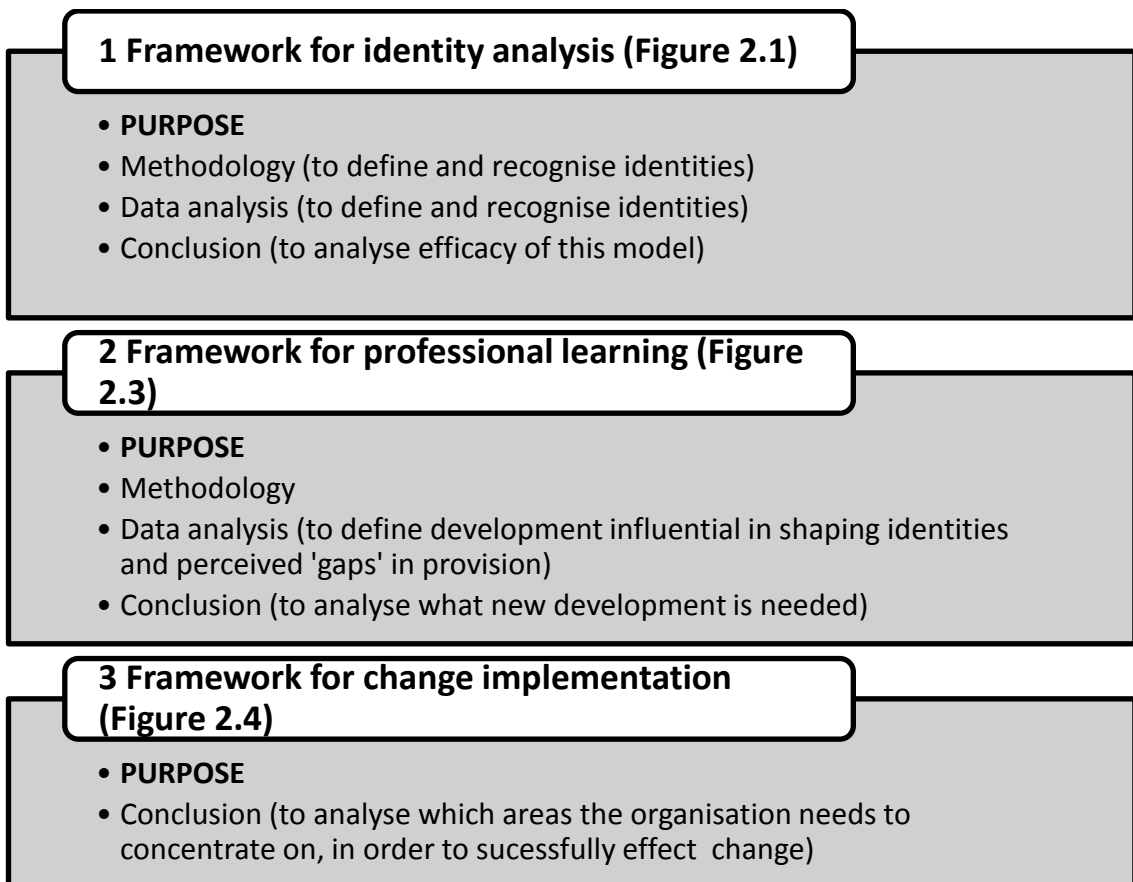


Figure 2.5 Summary and purposes of diagrammatic frameworks

Figure 2.1 explored the conceptual underpinning informing both the exploration of identity and the proposed methodology and provided a new framework for identity analysis.

Figure 2.3, based on Heron's six category intervention analysis (1999), provides a pictorial representation which outlines a framework for professional learning. This framework is to be used to analyse both perceptually effective forms of professional learning that have been undertaken, and the extent to which those opportunities resulted in the type of transformational learning needed to impact on identity (Mezirow, 1991; Heron, 1998, 1999, 2001).

Figure 2.4, taken from Kotter (1995), addresses the professional dimension of the study, offering a framework for change implementation. This will be used to analyse to what extent change is being embedded within the organisation and areas where action is needed. It will be discussed within the context of the conclusion to aid the prescient nature of the inquiry.

The following chapter discusses the ways in which the literature and conceptual underpinnings outlined throughout this chapter inform the methodology for the study.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the rationale behind the choice of methodology for the study, examines the 'methodological approach, methods, research instruments and the site of the study', offers 'a justification for the methods', and considers the context of the research and how this affected and influenced the choice of methodology (Burgess et al., 2006) and how the research was carried out in the field.

The chapter begins with a summary of the research questions developed from the literature review. It then describes the key conceptual framework, emerging from the literature review, underpinning the ways in which identities will be defined. This is followed by a short analysis of the pilot study, and an examination of the importance of the insights gained within the study and how these insights contributed to the main phase of the research and data analysis. A discussion detailing the considerations for presentation of the narrative and the ways in which the pilot study informed these follows. The nature and duration of the interviews is discussed along with the research site. This is followed with an outline of the factors influencing the research sample and how the final sample was finally decided upon. Because of the focus on qualitative interviews as the primary source of data, attention then turns to the ethical considerations arising from this and how they influenced both the approach and the concomitant data analysis. This then leads into a discussion on key challenges faced within the study and the position of the researcher.

The final sections of the chapter examine the rationale for and use of a phenomenological narrative approach and how this impacts upon data analysis and presentation of the narrative.

Research questions

The research questions emerging from the literature review and trialled during the pilot study are as follows:

The nature of teaching identities

- 1 What are teaching identities and how do they manifest?

The changing nature of teaching identities

- 2 Is there evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment?

Preparing for a new teaching role

- 3 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?

Supporting teaching in the new role

- 4 What professional learning have teaching staff experienced that has contributed to their feelings of professional effectiveness in an online role?

Lessons for the higher education institution

- 5 How can the above be used to inform professional learning of part-time higher education teachers working within a VLE based upon the principles of social constructivism?

Key conceptual framework and underpinning

In order to satisfy both the interpretative and the phenomenological aspects of the study and to integrate the key concepts that emerged during the literature review, this section highlights the concepts that underpin the study and how these are articulated in terms of identity research.

As discussed in the literature review, identities have been described in many different ways and from a number of psychological, psychosocial, biological and philosophical standpoints. The literature review explored approaches to learning and identity formation, analysing them not only in terms of the research but also in terms of the ways in which describing identity could be adapted and shaped in order to frame the research methodology and methods of data analysis within the study.

The diagram below (Figure 3.1) brings together the different strands which the literature review argued were most influential in exploring how online teaching identities manifest and evolve. It illustrates how the different facets of identity change and evolve, melding and merging in order to adapt to the online environment. This diagram aims to link and explain the relationship between the concepts (those unnumbered and described on the outer edge of the four quadrants) underpinning the research and how they are articulated within the context of the research interviews. The concepts numbered 1–4 in the centre of the diagram, which are expanded and explained in the numbered sections below, illustrate both the ways in which those described on the outer edge contribute to the formation of identities and the way in which this is conceptualised within the study. The diagram highlights the importance of the role of identity construction

through the interviews and through the narratives themselves, taking the view that the researcher participant descriptions of the identities represent articulations of identity.

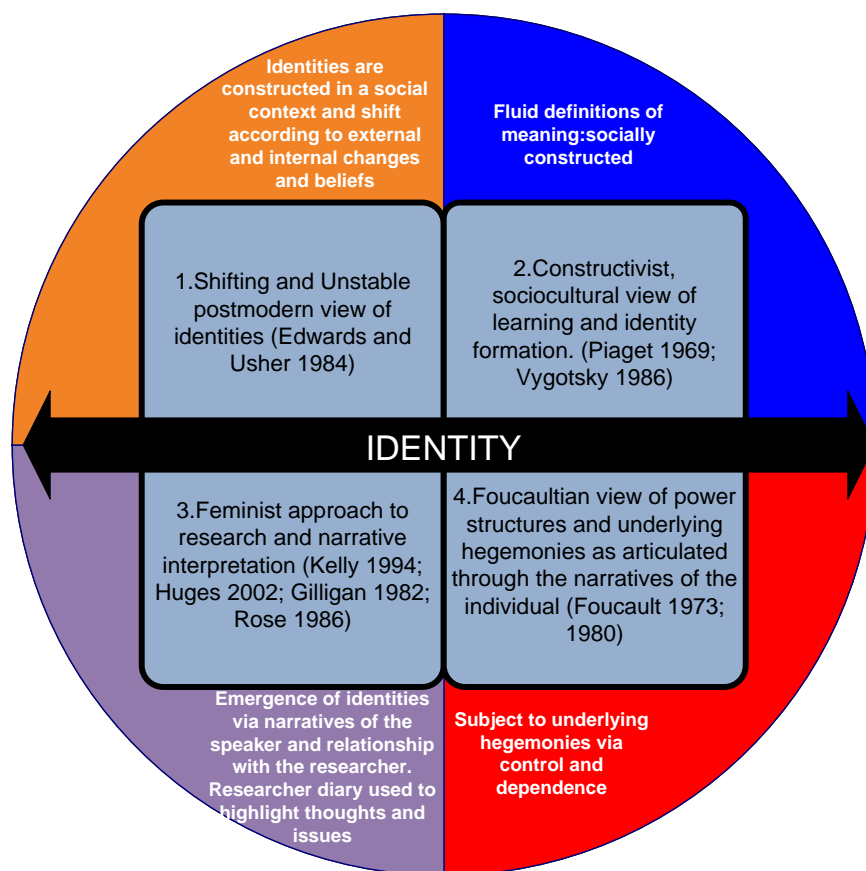


Figure 3.1 Framework for identity analysis

The following sections link ideas explored within the literature review to a rationale for proposing this framework for identity

1 Postmodern view of identities construction

The postmodern view of identities construction underpins the entire diagram in order to represent identities which shift and alter according to context. This postmodern underpinning gives rise to the idea that the essence of social reality is

superior to bureaucratic or scientific forms of reasoning (Gilligan, 1982; Lyotard, 1984; Edwards and Usher, 1994), and this is key to both the methodology used in the interpretation of the data, and the relationship between the researcher and the interlocutor throughout the 'whole study' (rather than merely within the context of the interviews). This section is also underpinned by the postmodern idea that identities are formed at the point mentioned during the literature review, the point of metanoia where individual subjectivities, which sometimes conflict, meet. The postmodern ideas within the literature review also embrace the idea of the individual shaping their world and identities partly via the hegemonies or underlying beliefs that they privilege as being true. This is articulated in more detail in the discussion below of the Foucaultian view of power.

The postmodern context in which the study is located supports the phenomenological methodology, as it philosophically embraces the notion of identity creation via the perceptions of the individual, while also encompassing the notion of identity as shifting, unstable and, to an extent, formed via perceptions of social interactions and environment. These elements are expanded upon in the discussions that follow.

2 Constructivist, sociocultural approach to learning

As discussed in the literature review, the constructivist premise on which the study is based comes from a category of learning theories in which the emphasis is placed on the personal agency of the learner, and on ways in which the social and cultural environment influence the learning process. The theory, based largely on the work of Piaget (1969) and Vygotsky (1986), assumes that there is no such thing as an objective view of reality and that our views of reality are formed from

our own constructions. This approach to learning takes a particular view of the human mind and its workings and assumes that how someone thinks and reasons is determined by human culture (Stevenson, 2004). Within this sociocultural view of learning there are certain assumptions made:

- Individual change is not separable from social change;
- individual understanding is always distributed in its nature;
- language only has meaning in the context of activity when words are being used in a particular way;
- people are agents in solving problems;
- perception and action arise together and co-construct each other; and operate in conjunction with the environment.

(adapted from The Open University, 2008, pp. 57–60; see also Bruner, 1997)

The social constructivist premise also points up the idea that teachers and learners learn from each other, and contests the notion of the expert. In this view, each brings their own experiences to learning and negotiate meaning between them. The relationship between the learner and teacher is key to the learning process as they work together to create a joint understanding of the ‘truth’. In MOODLE the learning tools have been designed with this relationship in mind and are available for teachers to key in to new pedagogies to build an environment in which learning is negotiated and constantly evolving. The use of social networking tools in the learning environment needs also to be considered, as this appeared during the literature review to be an important and emerging area for discussion. From a constructivist point of view, applications such as Facebook®, Twitter® and LinkedIn® have almost unlimited potential for learner interaction and, in terms of

this study, create great opportunities for the linking and melding of personal with professional identities.

Other important elements to the study draw from the ideas of John Dewey (1916), who links learning and thinking with engagement in action, and Bandura (1977), whose work focuses on the interpersonal relations involving imitation and modelling and the ways in which observation can become part of learning.

Bandura's work formed part of the theoretical underpinning of my previous work on the professional identities of linguists (Baxter, 2004). The pilot study revealed the importance not only of active engagement with the online environment but also of shadowing experienced practitioners in the new environment. Respondents in the pilot project articulated how helpful they found it to be able to 'lurk' on other teacher's conferences so that they could see how to shape their own pedagogies from observing the good and bad points of other teachers.

3 Feminist approach to qualitative research

This section of the diagram emphasises the feminist underpinning of the study and is founded upon the principles of third wave feminism, which privileges the anecdotal, subjective and 'frivolous' aspects of self-talk (Gilligan, 1982; Maclure, 1993a; Sikes, 2006). Refuting the idea that identities formation can be analysed according to a set of pre-ordained 'truths', this ideology is supported by Braebeck (Braebeck 1993) view of feminist philosophical orientation that prioritises the phenomenological, contextual and relativistic viewpoint over that of the so-called rational view. This approach is also underpinned by the notion that the individual, while taking facets of their identity from interaction with others, in the constructivist mode, is also viewed as agentic in their own development. This may at times

appear a difficult balance to achieve and at times even slightly contradictory. The phenomenological approach attempts to mitigate and attenuate the contradictions by encompassing both views. This approach is outlined later in the chapter.

The feminist approach is also characterised in this study by the role of the researcher as narrator. This is an area not without issues, some of which were discussed to a degree in the literature review and are explored further in terms of the arguments on data presentation methods emerging within the pilot project.

Gorelick (1991) makes the point that the involvement of the researcher as narrator can lead to over-interpretation and lack of objectivity, but Sfard and Prusak (2005) make a distinction between what they term as self-addressed stories and those that are addressed to a researcher, asserting that the narratives are styled differently but both have value. They make a distinction between the versions of identity produced by the different methods. They also see the narrator as interpreter of another form of identity-building and one that is distinct from both self-addressed stories and those addressed to a researcher. Kelly supports this, arguing that this form of interviewing has become the 'paradigmatic feminist method' (Kelly et al., 1994, p. 34). Paradigmatic because of the way in which it empowers the participant to articulate their feelings and sentiments and narrate their identities in collaboration with the researcher. In this study, I narrate jointly with the participants. By offering the opportunity for them to tell their own stories and amend transcripts as they see fit, they, too, are the authors of their own stories and identities. I mediate this development by presenting the ideas and thoughts of the participants according to conceptual and thematic underpinnings.

A number of researchers acknowledge that the interpretation of the interviewer and the meaning that participants attribute to their experience may cause some conflicts (Kelly et al. 1994; Phoenix, 1994). This is mediated during the study by the articulation of the role underpinning feminist conceptualisation and combining it with the important reflexive tool of the research blog. The blog allows me to explore, within paradigms outlined within this project, ways in which my own identity has evolved throughout the course of this research. This is important, not purely because of its probable impact upon the research interviews and participants, but also in terms of the exploration of my own journey as a teacher in both a face-to-face and an online environment. The blog also provides me with opportunities to explore the transference and projection that occurred during the research interviews, and to examine how this impacted upon the participants and, concomitantly, the research itself (Willig, 2005; Langridge, 2007; Appendix 1 in this study). Insights emerging from both are discussed in detail within the discussion and data analysis and are fundamental to the notion of the professional relevance of this work and the extent to which the conclusions can be considered valid and robust in light of the research methodology (Burgess, 1989, 2006; Macfarlane, 2004).

In choosing the feminist narrative form of research I also aimed to highlight the moral, intellectual and creative struggles that are being played out as the teacher constructs and authors new identities. The playful aspects, mirrored by this type of narrative and featured in the literature review, are key elements in creating a narrative that is both 'interesting and interested'. This is both a facet of the postmodern approach and an attribute pointed to by a number of writers as a feminist approach to narrative creation (Gilligan, 1982; Rose, 1982; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Reinharz, 1992). In terms of data presentation, this emphasises

the importance of metaphor and anecdote as a valuable and rich source of information and insight into the ways in which new and old identities meld and yet remain, to a certain extent, contranitent: struggling in opposition with each other in pursuit of new ways of feeling comfortable and confident in a role.

4 Foucaultian view of power: its role in identity formation

The Foucaultian view of power is important to the study in terms of its contribution in offering insights and understanding of the implicit and dominant power discourses playing out within the oral expression of professional identities, allowing the reader and researcher valuable insights into ‘what may be possible, what is impossible and what may be perceptibly achievable given the individual’s own views of their limitations within the power structures within which they operate’ (Foucault, 1973b). The individual’s articulation of what is possible and what may not be attainable is important, not only from a motivational point of view, but also in beginning to try and understand how these beliefs were formed. Addressing these beliefs and expectations is an important element of any professional learning and so will feature a great deal in the ability of this research to contribute to any professional debate upon the subject (Mezirow, 1991; McAdams et al., 2006).

Revisions in light of the pilot study

The pilot study took place over a six-month period. Just three people were interviewed and each interview lasted two hours. The reason that they took so long was in order not only to probe the experiences of the respondents, but also to permit them time to consider their responses and bring questions of their own to

the process (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The insights and questions that emanated from these interviews then informed the main phase of the study.

The insights gained during the first three interviews were extremely valuable, enhancing what Lily Orland-Barak (2002) terms 'the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher' (p. 239). This notion was proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 41–2) and extended by Orland-Barak (2002) in her work on reflections of a complex construct, which centres on the idea that on-going and deep engagement with theory and 'continual interactions with data' enable the researcher to engage more deeply in the research material. However, unlike her approach, the research could not be classed as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), as the second interviews built upon ideas that emanated from the first, rather than creating new theories and concepts upon which to build. This approach, explored in the literature review, links in to the literature (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Elliot, 2005) wherein the value of a sound conceptual basis and an integrative, inclusive approach to data collection provides enhancement to both narrative and research conversation.

Nature and duration of the interviews

A key area for consideration following the pilot project was the duration of the interviews. On reflection, and in light of feedback and further reading (Goodson and Sikes, 2001), I decided that 12 interviews each lasting an hour and each being followed up by a subsequent interview of an hour would have the advantage of being less onerous for the participants. It would also offer them the opportunity to reflect on discussions from the first interview in light of new and emerging professional learning opportunities (Goodson, 1991). In order to give participants

time to reflect, particularly in light of new experiences of teaching and learning online, I decided to leave six months between interviews.

The interview schedule is located within Appendix 7 along with the questions from both the pilot study (Appendix 2) and the main study (Appendix 5). Participants have been given pseudonyms in order to give them anonymity. Further discussion on sample and ethical considerations are outlined below.

The questions for the second interviews emerged from themes that came up in the first round. Cases where the participants had flagged up future attendance on training courses or participation in new web-based collaborative work (e.g. on forums, wikis, blogs and Facebook®) were noted and integrated into the question scheme for the second meeting.

In terms of the use of key aspects of language to both emphasise and highlight underlying meaning, the work of Goodson (1981, 1991) and Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 72) remained important to the data analysis. The period during which the respondents had the opportunity to revise and rethink their narrative, in light of the questions and on reflection, aimed at providing not only a richness of data but also an insight into the teacher as a person. It also helped to illuminate ways in which the moral, intellectual and creative struggles play out as the teacher constructs new identities in light of professional learning. I did feel that it might be useful to flag the interview as a 'professional space' within which to reflect on teaching and learning, but this was unnecessary as the participants nearly all mentioned this aspect without being prompted. Discussions on ways in which the pilot project informed the data presentation are outlined later in this chapter (see the sections entitled 'Data analysis' and 'Presentation of the narrative').

An aspect of the pilot project which proved to be particularly illuminating was the choice of research site: where the interviews were physically located. The points that this raised are outlined in the following section.

Research site

When I set out to interview participants, the place where they were interviewed was mainly dictated by ease of access. As a result, one of the participants was interviewed in a hotel and the other two in office environments in private meeting rooms at two different locations within the OU. The interview carried out off campus felt more relaxed and yielded a richer data set than those carried out within the University. The individual seemed to respond to me as an interested party, rather than as a member of the University's managerial staff (my position at the time). The interviews that took place on campus did yield some rich data but the participants tended to refer quite frequently to how this data would be used to make things better for associate lecturers. I felt that there was a much greater degree of what Dean and Foot Whyte (1958) describe as both 'ulterior motives' and 'bars to spontaneity' (p. 35), the two respondents both articulating that within my role, I was in a position to use the interview material to directly influence staff development within the University. This was problematic. I was at the time charged with developing new online and print resources for staff development but was also aware that the increasingly online approach to development was deeply unpopular among lecturers. These elements are discussed below in the section on ethical considerations.

As a result of these aspects the subsequent interviews were carried out in the homes of the respondents or over the telephone. The telephone interviews had the advantage of saving time for both participant and researcher and offered the opportunity for participants to respond via Skype®. This allowed us to see each other and provided a personal touch in addition to a relaxed and familiar environment. The choice between a telephone or face-to-face interview was left up to the participants.

There was a difference between the interactions of the face-to-face interviewees compared to the telephone interactions. Those who participated face to face tended to ask me more questions about my professional role and background, whereas the telephone interviewees tended to ask little about me and spoke for much longer without needing to be prompted. The differences between the two interviews raised interesting questions for the study and for my role as researcher, and are discussed in more detail in the final Chapter of this study.

The report from the first year of interviews also yielded useful insights in terms of my questioning style. I was aware that during the interviews I had a tendency to ask too many questions and thus may have unintentionally suppressed stories and anecdotes which might otherwise have surfaced (Goodley et al., 2004). Interviews carried out during the main phase of the research were far less 'researcher-led' and as a result seem to have yielded a far richer data set.

Although the pilot project adopted the same approach as the main phase of the study, they differed greatly in the choice of sample. The reasons why this was so are outlined in the following discussion.

Research sample

As outlined in Chapter 1, The OU has 8000 part-time associate lecturing staff, teaching on over 500 courses using a blend of media. Some 62% of modules offered are web-focused and use a variety of tools to deliver learning. Some modules have been using e-technology for some time while others are still in the process of adopting new technologies. Associate lecturers are not a homogenous group, but emanate from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are employed full-time in other universities and may teach only a few hours per week for the OU, others work virtually full-time, combining a number of fractional contracts and working over a variety of programmes and modules. Some work full- or part-time as professionals within other contexts: law, social work, nursing, teaching, and so on. Some have professional and administrative roles within either the OU or other organisations, making them privy to different understandings and priorities in terms of policy decisions and imperatives, practices, pedagogies and procedures.

In addition to this complexity, access was also a key issue. The University is divided up into 13 regional and national centres, each employing associate lecturers across the six faculties of the University: The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Faculty of Arts, The Faculty of Maths and Computing, The Faculty of Social Science, The Faculty of Science, and The Open University Business School. The regional and national centres differ widely in terms of both culture and operating climate. For example, in Scotland many students are located remotely in the Highlands and islands and tutors have been working fully online with them for some time now, while in other areas, such as London, face-to-face tutorials are relatively well attended, which means that tutors may often have come to know their students in a face-to-face situation before tutoring them online. In

addition, the reporting lines for associate lecturers are also complex: in some faculties they report directly to a staff tutor, a full- or part-time academic member of staff located at one of the regional bases, but in some faculties they may report directly to a senior faculty manager, a member of staff whose contract is academic-related rather than academic. In some regions associate lecturers are employed by a regional subject hub, a subject centre which operates as a recruitment and management base for a cluster of regions, rather than by a single region or faculty. Access within any organisation is highlighted as an issue for researchers, but this needed to be considered in light of the research questions, so that any limitations due to pragmatic constraints around access could be outlined and highlighted within the context of the overall study. As Bryman (2006) points out, as ‘gaining access is also a political process ... and is almost always a matter of negotiation, the results of this negotiation are often referred to as “the research bargain”’ (p. 104). In terms of this study, the ‘research bargain’ and the final sample have implications for it. These are outlined later in this section.

The pilot study outlined earlier in the chapter was also used to test whether sampling from across the University would present any research issues (Bryman, 2006). Using the associate lecturers’ website⁶ to engage a small sample of participants from across the University, it was able to create what was hoped to be ‘a sample of those who had experienced the phenomena’ (Moustakas, 1994:22).

The three lecturers who featured in the pilot study came from different geographical areas and different faculties: one was based in the south-east of England and taught social sciences, another came from the north of England and

⁶ <https://msds.open.ac.uk/tutorhome/>

worked in education and language studies, while the final respondent came from Scotland and lectured in maths and computing. This initial sample afforded the opportunity to consider the impact of such divergence on the study. The regional elements were not problematic in light of the research questions: participants were all keen to talk about their online experiences, and although there were some differences between the balance of online working and face-to face-interaction, they did not impede the way in which respondents were able to discuss fully online working. However, faculty differences did impact on the responses: the individual from maths and computing had experienced a different level of online engagement to the other respondents, having not only worked online but also carried out extensive research in this area. This gave the interview an entirely different focus to the other two and confirmed my initial concerns about interviewing individuals classed as early adopters: that their online engagement extended far beyond purely operational aspects and therefore they had much more time to consider not purely teaching online. As a result, I felt as if I was interviewing an expert in the field rather than an individual who needed to employ technology in order to carry out their teaching role.

Considering this aspect, along with issues around access, I decided to limit the participants to my own faculty: The Faculty of Education and Language Studies. This still satisfied the recommendations within phenomenological research methodology discussed earlier, which advocated a 'criterion sample: finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon' (Creswell, 2007, p. 120).

This approach is not without caveats and the study fully acknowledges that no differentiation was made between gender or level of engagement in terms of hours spent teaching with the OU. Nor was any comparison attempted between those

teaching with other universities and those teaching purely for the OU. Although this would be an interesting study for the future, it was considered to be outside the scope of this research.

The project had already had the approval of the Director of Students and the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Language Studies; it had also been ratified by the University Ethics Committee (see Appendix 4). The Dean suggested that it would be a good idea to ask the permission of staff tutors (lecturer line managers), not only because they needed to be kept informed from a managerial perspective, but also because their role includes a staff development element. This element has recently become increasingly important since the University's recent decision to implement an associate lecturer appraisal programme, a key element of which will be to identify development needs and ways in which to address them.

In order to further refine the sample, it was decided to approach education staff tutors whose role encompasses qualifications that fall within the following areas:

- Childhood and Youth Studies
- Language and Communication
- Professional Studies in Education.

The advantage of further refining the sample was evident, both in terms of access and in restricting the number of applicants. It also offered a broad range of courses and levels delivered in English and employing the use of teaching technologies to various extents. I did consider also contacting staff tutors within the languages programme, but decided that the additional challenges of delivering programmes online in a foreign language presented a number of difficulties that were particular

to language programmes and that this area would therefore be better served within the context of a different research agenda.

The research sampling and size of sample followed that recommended within phenomenological methodology (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 5; Moustakas, 1994), that is, the sample size should range between 5 and 25 people and the sample should be based upon 'multiple individuals who have experienced the phenomenon' (Creswell, 2007, p. 120), in this case online teaching. For this study, 12 respondents came forward; however, one had to withdraw early on in the process for personal reasons, leaving me with 11. As the phenomenological methodology prescribed any number between 5 and 25, I decided not to replace the individual concerned.

As already demonstrated, the research site, choice of sample and nature and duration of the interviews all have implications in terms of the way in which the study plays out. As I have outlined above, researching from the inside presents its own challenges to both researcher and participant. Feminist phenomenology approaches interview data as being a joint negotiation of meaning between researcher and participant, but as I pointed out in the previous section, this is not unproblematic. In addition, the ethical considerations involved in choosing a qualitative narrative approach, placing interview data contextualised by literature central to subsequent findings has additional implications. These are discussed in the following section.

Ethical considerations

Insider research historically raises a number of ethical considerations and has over the years been subject to a number of criticisms levelled at what the work may mean for both participant and researcher. It also raises important questions about the role of the researcher and the impact of being an 'insider' both on the research project and on the relationship between participant and researcher. A criticism often levelled at insider research often concerns the 'implications and consequences of researchers going native, or adopting the same perspectives of those they are studying' (Sikes and Potts, 2008, p. 7). Inherent within this is the challenge of maintaining perspective while also creating a climate in which the participants can feel free to respond fully. Mauthner, Birch, Jessop and Miller, in Leeson (2007, p. 41), highlight how this plays out in the field, articulating the tensions between representing the views of participants, while also creating enough distance in order not to lead the discussion and satisfy the researcher's own particular political agenda. I found this to be a difficult balance to sustain at times, as the interviews felt very much easier and more natural when a certain amount of psychological projection and transference occurred between me and the research participants. I was also keen to avoid the feelings I had experienced as part of a research project in the past, when the researcher (a self-declared feminist female) acknowledged my contributions with a nod, but failed to engage further. This left me feeling that the researcher was evaluating and judging me and as a consequence I withdrew from the study.

Consideration of my own position in terms of online teaching and learning was a necessary part of the reflective processes and is inherent within feminist, narrative and phenomenological standpoints (Creswell, 2007). As was mentioned in Chapter 1, I was involved in early attempts to engage teachers in the use of technology for teaching, and for some years now have been an enthusiastic

proponent of online teaching and learning. I believe that they have great potential to expand the reach of learning to those who may otherwise struggle to engage with traditional face-to-face modes; however, this has always been tempered by the feeling that I have never quite managed to maximise the potential of such media mainly because of lack of exposure to the ways in which others teach online. This has sometimes resulted in an awareness of becoming 'stuck' in my online practices: frustratingly unable to bring about ways of learning which I perceive to be particularly effective. In the course of this research I was prompted to reflect a great deal on the type of learning, and the experiences, professional and otherwise, that contributed to my feeling more confident and articulate online. Sometimes my own reflections on this process concurred with those of the participants, often they did not, and I have tried to present both in light of my reading and research on the topic. The question of whether I have managed to create a 'true representation' of the topic is largely for the reader to judge. Creswell (2007) articulates this as multi-level activity wherein one understands 'one's own understandings of the topic, understandings derived from other sources and the documentation of this process in the written study. Self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work. The researcher, as a socio-historical interpreter, interacts with the subject matter to co-create the interpretations derived. Understandings from previous research give substance to the inquiry. Interpretative research is also a chain of interpretations that must be documented of others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at the end' (p. 206).

The participants in this study were viewed as 'co researchers' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 110), in that they were self-selecting and able to change or amend their accounts at any time during the research. Often termed participant validation, to

me this represented the ways in which both participant and researcher collaborated over common understandings of truth in this context. The 'importance of self-reports in data collection was emphasised so that the research participant felt that his or her contributions were valued as new knowledge on the topic and as an illumination of meanings inherent in the question' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 111). The fact that 7 out of the 11 participants changed their accounts both after the first interview and the second reflected the collaborative nature of the study. Viewed through a critical lens, it may seem that the participants were unduly leading the research, that their agendas were dominating, and that their reviewing of the transcript was a cynical attempt to shape the nature of the study: to use the interview and the study in order to make public their, possibly, less than positive views on the institution. This may have been detrimental to the study, had it not been viewed through the interpretative lens of both the framework for identity analysis (Figure 3.1) and the framework for professional learning (Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2), both of which contextualised and located the responses within the ambit of the research questions.

Sikes (2010) argues that in order to carry out narrative research, 'if someone is a radical feminist or a Marxist they need to say they are before they start offering an analysis' (p. 13). While agreeing that to a certain extent this is true, there is also a danger that labelling an approach in the context of the research interview may lead to misinterpretation. If, for example, I said that I am taking a feminist stance to interviewing, there are many understandings about what it means to be a feminist. So to declare positionality as a feminist may limit the ambit of research in terms of its appeal and power to effect social change by immediately alienating those for whom this ideology may have negative connotations. Connotations that may or may not be founded upon clear understandings of what is implied by the particular

approach. Consequently, although the project is located, via the framework for professional learning, within the paradigms of postmodern, constructivist and feminist approaches, I continue to emphasise the elements from each that will be used to define this research. Likewise, in my approach to hegemony where I draw upon the later work of Foucault, I deliberately do not use the term domination, as Foucault did, as this would imply a lack of participant personal agency which would be contrary to the feminist approach (Foucault, 1980; Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Moss, 1988).

An additional element which preoccupied me throughout the research process was my own approach. Was I, in effect, the same person when I interviewed Mark as when I interviewed Anna? I feel that I certainly was not. I assumed a different identity depending on the person being interviewed and their degree of resistance, fear, friendliness or otherwise that they displayed within the research process. Mauthner, Birch, Jessop and Miller, in Leeson (2007, p. 22), discuss this in terms of the research persona, arguing for and against assuming an 'effective research persona' that is assumed like a mask in exactly the same way with each participant. I considered this to be impossible and felt strongly that this was both counterproductive and lacking in terms of the feminist position that I adopted within the research interviews. I felt that it was my role as a researcher to make participants feel as comfortable as possible and as at home with the process as I could, and that in order to do this, I needed to adapt my approach to the individual. The feeling that a professional persona had to be assumed in order to achieve some sort of standardisation in my view negates the very purpose of the jointly produced narratives engendered within this research, and the constructivist, postmodern approach underpinning the study.

This project relies heavily upon phenomenologically gathered interview data, in common with other research on professional identities within the public sector, particularly those in the fields of social work and nursing (Apesoa-Varano, 2007; Baldwin, 2008). But debate on using interviews as a core element of any study has intensified in recent years, with what is described as 'an over-dependence among qualitative researchers on interview data, and above all their use of such data as a window on the world and/or the minds of their informants' (Hammersley, 2003, p. 119).

Discussions around the value of interviews in qualitative research are particularly concerned with the extent to which we view individuals' accounts as true representations of 'the life as lived' (Sikes, 2010, p. 17) or whether we view them as storied lives: personal representations that are coloured by their perceptions of researcher expectations and political agendas and limited by the language they possess to articulate their lives and experiences (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002, p. 11). The more extreme critiques argue that the interview performs no more useful a function than a site for 'discursive meaning making' (Atkinson and Coffey, 2002), that the interview only has value in terms of an analysis of how the individual self presents in an interview situation. Preoccupations about whether respondents are telling the truth raise philosophical questions about what 'the truth' is: to what extent experiences and narratives of experience are congruent, and perhaps more importantly, to what extent the researcher can claim that any data gained in this way can be said to be true. This is particularly prevalent in work carried out on researching the powerful wherein 'policy actors' often convey institutional discourses and enact expected roles within the research interview. This has been highlighted as a site of particular tension for feminist researchers wishing to

‘demystify the powerful by revealing, in their own words, the slender reeds upon which many of their pet policies rest’ (Mickelson, 1994, p. 133).

But this particular study takes a social constructivist approach to identity based largely upon the work of Piaget (1969) and Vygotsky(1986) and argues that professional identities are learned and created using views of reality formed from our own constructions (see the discussion on the key conceptual framework Chapter 3). Therefore it is the individual’s construction of their own reality that is important when investigating the ways in which both professional identities manifest and online identities are changing and evolving. If an individual constructs their reality in a different way to the way in which they are living it, then within this study this would be taken to indicate an agentive move by the individual to articulate a teaching identity that reflects the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced (Willig, 2004, 2008, p. 70; Creswell, 2007, p. 159). This brings two dimensions to the research: ‘the phenomenological dimension, that is, it aims to represent the participant’s view of the world’, and the interpretative view, that is, one that is ‘dependent on the researcher’s own conceptions and standpoint’ (Willig, 2008, p. 70).

Issues around narrative truth feature particularly prevalently in sociological studies in the strategic use of narrative in cases of individuals suffering from illness or disability (Young, 1989; Kohler and Reissman, 1990). The relationship between truth, identity and the researcher is particularly well illustrated by Reissman in her account of the ways in which an individual creates a positive coping identity in difficult circumstances:

The self that Burt projects is a very favourable one, and the narratives attest to his resilience. He does not allow himself to be defined as a cuckold, as the rejected spouse (yet his wife left him for another man after he became disabled), nor does he portray himself as an inadequate parent or worker (yet his adolescent son left home and he is no longer able to hold down a job). By effectively narrating his own experience, in the context of cultural understandings about sickness, he is able to project a strong masculine identity, even in the face of behaviour that violates common sense definitions of masculinity.

(Riessman, 1990, p. 1195)

In this study, the narratives represent the sense-making activities of the individuals and it is within the context of the narrativisation of these sense-making activities that the changing identities emerge (see Chapters 4 and 5). Dean and Foot Whyte's paper 'How do you know if the informant is telling the truth?' (1958) outlines a number of key issues in terms of truth and the research interview. They argue that the interview can only represent 'the perception of the informant, filtered and modified by his cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his personal verbal usages' (p. 1). They conclude that although researchers are not in the position to consider whether something is true or not, by considering four principal factors they are able to take a more analytical view of data that emerges during interview situations. The four factors include:

Are there any ulterior motives which the informant has that might modify the situation?, are there any bars to spontaneity which might inhibit free expression?, for example, where an informant feels that the affairs of his organisation or his own personal life should be put forward in a good light

for public consumption, he will hesitate to bring up spontaneously the more negative aspects of the situation, does the informant have the desire to please the interviewer and finally, are there any idiosyncratic factors that may cause the informant to express only one facet of his reactions to a subject, such as mood, wording of the question, and extraneous factors such as a baby crying.

(Dean and Foot Whyte, 1958, p. 35)

In considering the aforementioned factors, some of which did come to light during the earlier discussions of the pilot project, I made efforts to ensure that the participants were as comfortable and free from distractions as possible during the interview, and that they were aware that I was not in a position to influence management directly as a result of the interview itself. However, the EdD programme specifically links research to impact and in this sense it is important to acknowledge that participants may well feel that this is an opportunity to channel ulterior motives in a perceptibly productive manner in order to effect institutional change.

Any qualitative study raises its own challenges for both researcher and participant; ones that arose within this particular study are outlined in the discussion that follows.

Challenges for the study and the role of the researcher

I was able to address many of the challenges within the project via the pilot study, which, as outlined earlier, revealed key areas for development within the study's main phase. Perhaps one of the key challenges for this study is that both policy

and practices are moving at such a pace. In the time between the first set of interviews and the follow-up conversations, participants had undergone great changes in their personal and professional engagement with online technologies. Some had been encouraged by the first interview to participate in online discussion groups on Facebook®, some to engage in further learning within The Open University and some within other institutions. Others had been encouraged by family and friends to take their online engagement to a different level, enhancing both their personal and their social lives.

The political and economic landscape, too, has moved on greatly since this study began. Not only within the context of a new government and the advent of a new age of economic austerity, but also in terms of the funding constraints recently imposed on higher education along with a huge rise in student fees. These factors have helped to create an increasingly demanding student body and an environment in which the marketisation of higher education leaves only the fittest institutions able to survive (Clarke et al., 2007; Newman and Clarke, 2009).

Whether the participant reaction to this study is related to the above is difficult to say. Participants were very keen to take part in the follow-up stage of the interviews and these proved very fruitful indeed. Not only in terms of a heightened engagement with the topic, but also in terms of the ways in which participants were able to engage with new technologies, stretching far outside of the OU environment and taking the perceptual nature of professional learning to new and exciting levels. I found, too, that new literature, cinema and gaming innovations had created new understandings and raised awareness of new possibilities within teaching and learning that had, in the context of the first interviews, appeared for some to be strictly in the province of the ‘techno savvy’: not something that could

be engaged with by those outside the realm of teaching ICT-related subjects. This created both challenge and opportunity within the research.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges within the research has taken place in relation to my own development and degree of reflexivity not just in terms of what it means to be a researcher but also in terms of the ways that my thinking about the role and context of higher education have developed.

In terms of my role and professional identity, my career path has changed radically over the time that I have spent researching this topic. Moving from a post involved with lecturer development, to a role as Senior Manager in The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, and then becoming a full-time researcher on an international project has meant that at each point within this research I have considered it from a different perspective. Ethically, I have had to acknowledge the considerable transference and projection that I have experienced while interviewing, transcribing and following up on the participants. I have also created a Facebook® group and have had a number of friend requests from participants in the study. This, too, has led to some ethically challenging issues.

I feel that starting an online blog enhanced my research interviews and provided transference between researcher and participant that was helpful to negotiate meaning in the context of the research. The blog also details the ways in which the research has impacted profoundly on my personal and family life and the struggles and new ways of relating to family and friends that this has engendered. I include a short example of the blog in Appendix 1.

The research, too, has provoked some very strong emotions, not only within me as researcher but also within the participants, and I have received many personal emails which detail their fears and frustrations as teachers and educators. I also encountered some powerful political feelings from participants. One particular incident took place while I was interviewing in London. A participant asked if I would interview the rest of the department on this subject, a request that I turned down because they did not fulfil the criteria for taking part. None the less, it did raise some interesting questions on how this research may be used in the future.

The considerations above in conjunction with my proposed framework for professional learning led me to look to a phenomenological, narrative approach, the rationale for which is outlined in the following section.

Phenomenological, narrative approach

Because of the psychological emphasis of this study I decided to take a phenomenological approach to the research. This approach draws directly on the phenomenological tradition of philosophy, which focuses on human experience and, in particular, the perceptions of the individual. It was highlighted in the literature review as being a way in which to integrate facets of different identities which appear within an individual and to explore aspects of 'intentionality', or the idea that whenever we are conscious we are always conscious of something (Langridge, 2007, p. 21). This is important in terms of this study's focus on identities and also features in the role of the researcher within the study, that is, as interpreter of the sense-making activities of the participant. The approach is not without its critics, particularly in light of the 'interpretative role of the researcher' (Willig, 2004, 2008, p. 70); nevertheless, it brings two dimensions to the research:

‘the phenomenological dimension, aiming to represent the participant’s view of the world’; and the interpretative view that is ‘dependent on the researcher’s own conceptions and standpoint’ (Willig, 2008, p. 70).

With this in mind the research design aims to encompass both areas. In order to address the phenomenological dimension it was necessary to define the concepts underpinning the individual’s view of the world: the situative, cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, teaching and identity formation (see Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1). The Interpretative view of the study was addressed by means of a research blog, in which I as researcher articulated the ways in which I engaged with the research and the feelings and thoughts which this engendered. This was discussed earlier during the discussion on ethics and challenges for the study. The approach involves attending to people’s experience as they themselves articulate it. This contrasts with other phenomenological approaches which attempt to probe cognitions. In summary, this approach sees the telling of the identity to be the identity and focuses on what are experienced (noema) and the way it is experienced (noesis) (ibid.). Designed to grasp the understanding of the participant (Van Manen, 1988, 1990, 2002), this approach involves interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data. There is no ‘original hypothesis’ to be proved or disproved but, rather, a series of questions to be probed. This method has been used by a number of identity researchers (Maclure, 1993a; Flowers et al., 1997; Smith, 2004) and found to produce stories that well reflect lived experiences.

The sampling in phenomenological research is generally purposive rather than random and was discussed in greater detail earlier in the chapter (see the section entitled ‘Research sample’). An important part of the process is the conversational

style of the interviews, which encourage meaning to emerge intersubjectively between interviewer and participant. There is an assumption within this approach that the researcher is not apolitical and will be approaching the subject in a certain way due to their own preconceptions, political agenda and feelings, considerations that were outlined in the earlier section on ethical considerations. In light of this my researcher blog is an important element within this research, offering insights into the ways that I reacted to the participants while also giving some indication of my own journey during the course of the research (Gadamer, 1975).⁷ My stance was also discussed at length during the introductory chapter, and outlined in the framework for identity analysis (Figure 2.1) in Chapter 2. The collaborative efforts between researcher and participant in the creation of the stories are also key to the data analysis and presentation. The method for data analysis, following a phenomenological, narrative approach is discussed below (Moustakas, 1994; Clough, 2002; Langridge, 2007).

Adopting a phenomenological approach also engendered consideration of the way in which the narrative approach to data analysis and representation would fit with the overall purpose of the study. This is outlined in the following section.

A biographical framework: revealing the hegemonies

In the context of the literature review, in order to explore identities it is important to find out what underlying belief systems are held by the individual (Polkinghorne, 1988). He goes on to say that:

⁷ My research blog at <http://heteachingidentities.blogspot.com>

Identity consists not simply of a self-narrative that integrates one's past events into a coherent story, however. It also includes the construction of a future story that continues the 'I' of a person. If a person fails to project a hopeful story about the future, he or she undergoes a second kind of unhappiness, a life without hope.

(Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 107)

Uncovering the fundamental beliefs of the individual permits insights into the ways in which professional development not only will need to address the skill sets of the individual but also will positively impact on their pedagogies, making the link between their existing knowledge and the new materials and ways of working that will need to be adopted in order to be effective in the new environment. The idea of underlying hegemonies or beliefs was explored in some depth by Foucault (1980), who believed that power frequently resides in the domination of subject or person by their own underlying personal belief systems and that identification of the foundation of these beliefs is necessary in order to judge receptivity of an individual to learning, change and concomitant embracing of new identities. While Foucault's earlier work expresses a reluctance to believe in an individual's capacity for agency, believing instead that political forms of domination play a strong role in determining the individual as subject, his later work demonstrated a much greater degree in the belief of personal agency to negotiate a pathway within dominating discourses. This permitted him far greater convergence with the tenets and beliefs of third wave feminism (Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Moss, 1988). From the perspective of this study, it links intrinsically with motivation and emotion, the ability to be professionally salient or effective in a field and to feel motivated

enough to make the changes that context and environment demand (Reeve, 1992; Baxter, 2004).

The role of political landscape, sector and institution cannot be ignored in terms of individual hegemonies. A number of researchers have pointed out the powerful feelings and concerns of higher education teachers, centred on what they perceive to be expected by the institution in terms of the use of technology (Hanson, 2009). Not only powerful but in many ways loaded with negativity on what they perceive to be an ill-judged rush into the use of technology without the research base to prove its efficacy.

Exploration of these hegemonies has been carried out by a number of researchers within the fields of education and social sciences via the investigative tool of biographical narrative. The tool is able to put identities into the context of an interrelationship with other identities so that new learning can be contextualised by what is already known (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 1994; Goodson, 1991, Maclure, 1993b). Use of these narratives is known to be effective in creating discourse within which meanings are negotiated between teller and listener. But the discourse also has a third dimension; a dimension that seeks to engage the reader in the key elements within the discourse. In this case, key elements that have been jointly articulated between researcher and participant, and a sense of how these are to be amplified for the benefit of the reader agreed within the text (Elliot, 2005, p. 9).

Accepting that identities are stories, generated between teller and listener, creates challenges for the writer/researcher who has the dual responsibility of both communicating and amplifying the teller's (research participant) key points, while

also presenting the information in a way which engages the reader. There is a possibility that this joint presentation of negotiated meaning can be achieved with the use of a woven narrative in which a number of individual narratives may be brought together to articulate key ideas, anecdotes and shared meanings (Clough, 1999, 2002; Goodley, 2004). This form of narrative presentation is advocated by a number of researchers within the fields of psychology and social sciences (Coffey 1999; Goodley, 2004; Langridge, 2007), who see it as an effective and powerful means to present data while assuring anonymity. This is discussed later in this chapter in the section on presentation of the narrative.

Narrative enquiry has a long history in educational research (Dewey, 1916, 1934), but the woven narrative is a more recent technique that was initially pioneered in the work of researchers working in the field of disability and education (Clough, 1999; Goodley, 2004). It is thought to be particularly effective in terms of reaching out to the reader when issues are particularly complex and unstable and where the voice of the teacher is in danger of being 'drowned out' by the political climate in which it is heard. It is for this reason that the pilot project within this research sought to explore this relatively new technique.

However, the technique is not without its critics and reactions on less conventional ways of presenting research have been explored in some depth (Sikes 2006).

Sikes warns that they may be 'risky' when carried out by new or doctoral researcher (Sikes, 2006), citing Hammersley, who suggests that the educational research community needs to have 'boundaries to defend itself from researchers who want to write imaginative literature, poetry or political tracts and pretend that these are research (Hammersley, 2005, p. 152, cited in Sikes, 2006). But clothing the issues in this way would seem, to a certain extent, to negate the ways in which

respondents themselves articulate the experiences that make up their professional identities. If the imaginative and political tracts that Hammersley refers to emanate from the respondent rather than the researcher, then it surely follows that they are valid forms of expression. Textual representations of what were originally spoken articulations need devices in order to achieve the amplification which in spoken discourse would be achieved by body language and paralinguistic cues. The coalescence and fusion of anecdotes, jokes and other narrative tools present a holistic view of what it means to be struggling with new professional identities in uncertain and difficult economic times. I found that the method was supported by those writing in the realm of phenomenological research, which saw this as an engaging way in which to present themes within findings (Willig, 2004, 2008; Langridge, 2007).

Researching from 'the inside' is riven with debate on issues of boundaries, ethics and political and contextual considerations. One of the conundrums for the researcher is to find a way to present findings which are reflected in an engaging manner that embodies the ways in which the study contributes to knowledge. As Walford (1994) points out: 'doctoral work is a contribution to knowledge, not just a contribution to the student's self- knowledge' (p. 4).

Although I continue to write a reflexive log of my experiences when carrying out this research project, at the time that alone did not remove the transference and projection experienced when interviewing colleagues (Baxter, 2004, p. 6; Makin et al., 2006). Earlier in this chapter I discussed the issues and challenges involved when using these methods and how they needed to be weighed against the attractions of using this powerful means of representation. The primacy of reflecting on the research methodology is stressed by Sikes (2006) and later by

Drake (2010); particularly within the realm of insider doctoral research. With this in mind I was keen to retain a balance between an accurate presentation of the data, and the need to make it interesting and engaging for the reader. Merleau-Ponty (1968) states that in terms of a phenomenological approach, reading his book leads not to a greater appreciation of how to write stories as such, but to a greater insight into the making and communicating of data for moral and political purposes. Researching from the inside cannot help but have political implications, not only for the researcher but for the establishment itself, and ways need to be found to achieve a balance between presenting the data in a powerful and synergistic way, while also maintaining the anonymity of the respondents. In order to consider the matter further, I decided to use the pilot project to try and present data using a narrative woven from the responses of two individuals (Goodley, 2004). In this way I aimed to evaluate the degree to which this would be effective in communicating key points, and the way in which it would be received by academic readers.

The fundamental idea of telling stories through narrative is an important part of creating new identities and concurs with a number of ideas on the way in which identities are developed. Sfard and Prusak (2005, p. 14), in agreement with Wenger (1998), see identities as 'a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person' and also support the idea of identities as trajectories, concurring with Mishler's view that they consist of both a trajectory and a person's own narrativisation (2000). They define this as the difference between actual identity and designated identity (Sfard and Prusak, 2005); the identities that you have versus the identity that you want to attain. This is crucial to the idea of using a narrative approach; the language of identities describing the formation of the identities themselves, not only emphasising existing identities but giving key

insights into the type of identities that the individuals aspire to attain. In terms of professional learning this aspect is important in identifying gaps in knowledge and key areas where confidence (self-salience) is low.

The rationale for using a biographical framework for identities research was also discussed in depth by Maclure (1993a), who supports the views uncovered by Beijaard et al. (2004) that both person and context are important to the study of identities and are best analysed using a 'biographical framework; using biography, autobiography, life history, narrative and anecdote' (p. 311). Although Wenger (1998) agrees in principle that the experience of identity in practice is a 'way of being in the world' (p. 151), he asserts that talking about ourselves and each other through words is not the full lived experience of engagement in practice. To a certain extent this may be true; we express thoughts about our performance in dialogues with colleagues, family and friends but our actual performance in the workplace may bear little resemblance to the way in which we portray ourselves within different social contexts. This is particularly apparent in teacher education where teacher and student teacher may articulate, via professional dialogue or conversation that is focused on work, their varying impressions of an observed teaching session. But this articulation of professional identity via storytelling gives us the opportunity to experiment with possible selves and in itself represents a learning opportunity as we create and re-create our identities and experiment with extensions and changes to our existing identities, secure in the knowledge that we can, at any time, retreat into the safety of the known, tried and tested.

Maclure (1993a) makes the important point that the analysis of biographical narrative is a good way of overcoming punitive abstractions and reductions of dominant discourses by 'bureaucrats, researchers, bosses or partners' (p. 3), a

key issue when considering the dominant discourses that are currently circulating around the adoption of online ways of working. In the case of higher education the discourses emanate not only from management within the institution but, as discussed earlier, as a result of key implementation strategies within the sector worldwide (OECD, 2009).

I emphasised earlier in the section that through storytelling it is possible to see what underlying assumptions are made by individuals regarding what the institution and the sector expect of them and in the ways that they feel they are 'measuring up' to these expectations. These expectations may not always be explicit but may be hidden within the many and varied communications that individuals are faced with on a daily basis. Communications may take the form of policy emails, discourse on forums, institutional pedagogical guidelines, current research papers, etc. and may be generic or within the individual's subject area. In analysing these hegemonies it may be possible to glean not only areas for development, but key channels of influence in the development of professional identities (Baxter, 2004).

Data analysis

Within phenomenological narrative methodology there are a number of different approaches to data analysis. Some view the texts as a group experience rather than considering the narratives separately. Humphrey (1991) refers to this as a 'composite textual description' (p. 124), and it is often presented as a woven narrative, one that brings together 'the essence' of the experience as it occurs within the group (p. 134). I felt that this approach would be an interesting one for this study, given that it was seeking to explore the situational, affective and

cognitive elements of the experience of online teaching identity and professional learning. However, after piloting woven methods of narrative within the context of the pilot project, I decided to present the data in a more conventional format (see Chapter 3 for discussion on the presentation of data and pilot project for an explanation of what constitutes a woven narrative and why this method was rejected for the final study).

After considering a number of methods of narrative analysis offered within the phenomenological tradition, I felt that a model which takes from a number of approaches (Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003; Langridge, 2007) would be most suitable in order to capture the affective, cognitive and situative elements of the phenomena outlined previously. I was also keen to capture the 'figurative language' that creates personal meaning and value to both individual and interlocutor (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 157; Giorgi, 2002).

The first stage of my data analysis involved reading the transcripts through a number of times in order to gain a sense of their overall meaning in relation to the research questions (Langridge, 2007, p. 88). Once this had been done the texts were analysed in order to identify the meaning units and the meaning elements, 'meaning units being understood as a piece of text whose meaning can only be understood in context, while elements are those parts whose meaning can be understood independent of context' (p. 91). The meaning units and the meaning elements were then clustered to form 'descriptions of the textures of the experience' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). These form the headings in the section on data analysis and form textures of experience for particular aspects of the research questions. These textual structural descriptions were related to elements that emerged during the literature to evoke both meaning and 'essence' of the

experience (ibid.). Within the context of this study I use the word element rather than theme to describe the cluster descriptions of the experience. This is due to the study's focus on identity and the elements that comprise and shape it in order for the identities to evolve.

Evoking the essence of the experiences involved the use of metaphor and anecdote in order to articulate the ways in which the respondents felt those experiences. This adds to the 'figurative language' described earlier. In research they are often used by researchers who wish to evoke the affective dimensions of the experience, while also highlighting cognitive and situational elements which impact upon the respondent's view (Anastoo, 1987, p. 154). This method of data analysis is also supported by feminist researchers in terms of its capacity not only to portray the anecdotal (Maclure, 1993a), but to use these anecdotes as 'a lens through which to view the particular life world of the individual' (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 159): a key element within the narrativisation of identity.

The analysis led to two principal areas for discussion: 'the evolving nature of higher education teaching identities' and 'preparation: supporting teaching in the new role'. These areas were further broken down into sub-categories in which elements of each were discussed in light of the findings and the literature. Both the principal areas for discussion and their sub-categories feature in Chapter 5.

Consideration of methods of data analysis also involved deliberating on methods for data presentation. Finding the best method to present data analysed according to the methodologies above, presented a number of issues. The discussion that follows outlines the rationale for the choice of data presentation and the ways in which this contributes to the overall aims of the study.

Presentation of the narrative

The presentation of data within the context of phenomenological, feminist research is a key element for consideration and, as such, was a central element when taking into account and evaluating the results and insights emerging from the pilot study. Phenomenological research advocates a flexible approach to the presentation of data (Langridge, 2007; Willig, 2008), and one that is highly dependent not only on the type of data gathered, but also on the purpose of the data in the mind of the participants.

The way in which the narratives were to be presented afforded a challenge for the research. I was keen to preserve the anonymity of the respondents and initially felt that one approach to take to data analysis would be to consider the narratives as one: to create a 'composite textual description' that would take elements of experience from all of the narratives and merge them into a single story (Humphrey, 1991, p. 124). This method is used a great deal within phenomenological studies and is employed primarily in order to mask the identities of respondents in situations in which their identities may be compromised should they be revealed (Humphrey, 1991; Goodley et al., 2004; Todres, 2007):

It draws a composite picture of the phenomenon emerging from the informants. The composite is not a simple re-telling. It is interpretation by the researcher in several important ways: through her knowledge of the literature regarding the phenomenon under enquiry, through listening and hearing the stories told by the informants, and through her own reflexivity during the process.

(Todres, 2007, p. 22)

As outlined by Todres (2007) the composite first-person narrative is more than a definition or series of statements about a phenomenon. It tells something that connects with universal human qualities so that the reader can relate personally to the themes, it is a story that readers can imagine in a personal way, that attempts to contribute to new understanding about the phenomenon, and it is not exhaustive, but allows the topic to be seen clearly. It aims to illuminate, 'to allow the reader to have an increased sense of contact with the phenomenon without fully possessing it' (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 588).

For me the arguments above presented a powerful rationale for employing this method and I decided to use the pilot project to trial the composite narrative, weaving the three pilot interviews into one and using a fictitious name for the single resultant narrative. Prior to this I asked the three respondents if they were happy for their responses to be portrayed in this way. None of the respondents expressed worry or discomfort about their narratives being articulated by the composite, so I went ahead and created the narrative.

I felt that the composite worked reasonably well. It articulated key thoughts, highlighted key issues and provided a coherent manner of telling the stories of the participants without compromising their identities. But Sikes's paper 'On dodgy ground? Problematics and ethics in educational research' (2006) highlights some of the key issues that continue to dominate the field, citing comments such as that made by Hammersley (2005, p. 152) that 'the educational research community needs to have boundaries to defend itself from researchers who want to write imaginative literature, poetry or political tracts and pretend that these are research'. Sikes points out that 'creative analytic practices' are being used, there is considerable resistance to them as legitimate research writing genres and they

can be 'dodgy for established academics, let alone doctoral students' (2006, p. 8). Most worrying in terms of this study, is the fact she also indicates that by not sticking to more traditional methods of representation, the early career researcher takes risks that may result in losing a position from where they may have had the opportunity to 'make a difference' (pp. 1–8). This was thought-provoking and gave me some concern, so I decided that I needed some feedback. Initially I sought and received permission to present my paper at an EdD residential weekend, within the context of a student supervisor discussion group, and in 2010 I presented the paper for consideration by the committee of the Academic Identities for the 21st Century Conference, which was being held at the University of Strathclyde.

The discussion at the residential weekend provided a microcosm of the points raised by Sikes in the previous paragraph: supervisors and students were divided on the subject. The topic provoked a passionate and very heated discussion. Some colleagues thought that from a feminist perspective it provided an excellent vehicle for this type of identity research. Others were less convinced, arguing that it gave me an amplified rhetorical tool which could be used covertly to press a particular personal political agenda. I felt that given the arguments for using this method within the field of phenomenological research (discussed earlier in the section on data analysis), the method was an appropriate form of data presentation and it was in this format that it was then presented to the conference committee at the University of Strathclyde. The paper was returned some days later, the committee asking me to change the data presentation to a more conventional style. I did so, and the paper was accepted. The resistance to this form of presentation calls into question why some methods are more acceptable than others. Discussion on creativity in the presentation of phenomenological research has created debate in the field for some time now. Wiles, Crow and

Pain's paper on reviews into claims for methodological innovation in qualitative research reveals some key reasons for innovation: 'Moral or ethical reasons for innovations accounted for more than a third of the papers and related to the desire to broaden understanding of the emotional aspects of a topic in order to present a holistic picture, or to issues of empowerment and acting fairly to participants either by increasing collaboration or reducing risk of harm' (Wiles et al., 2011, p. 595). They go on to say that 'these motivations were particularly prominent in relation to creative approaches and narrative approaches' (ibid.) and conclude by stating, 'methodological innovations are useful and appropriate only if they improve our methods of understanding the social world (p. 601). In this case I believe that the composite narrative provided a holistic presentation of the data: one that articulated the affective domain of the issues while also including issues and areas of concern. I feel that the composite also articulated the changing nature of online teaching identities in a more powerful way than the traditional narrative presentational methods that I subsequently employed for the purposes of this study. From an ethical point of view I would argue that the arguments against using this method, that is to say, that it could be prey to bias towards a researcher's agenda, do not fully consider the ways in which more conventional presentations of qualitative data offer equal potential for the highlighting of some aspects while occluding others. As Richardson points out:

In the routine work of the interviewer the interview is tape-recorded, transcribed as prose, and then cut, pasted, edited, trimmed, smoothed and snipped, just as if it were a literary text, which it is, albeit usually without explicit acknowledgement or recognition as such by the researcher.

Underlying this process is the belief that the purpose of text is to convey information, as though information consists of facts or themes, notions that

are taken to exist independent of the context in which they are articulated, as if the story the researcher has recorded, transcribed, edited, and rewritten as snippets is the true one .

(Richardson, 2003, p. 322)

The method that I chose to present the narrative is one employed within both narrative and phenomenological studies (Giorgi, 1985, 2002; Moustakas, 1994; Willig, 2008). Taking the two principal areas I outlined above at the end of the section on data analysis, 'the evolving nature of higher education teaching identities' and 'preparation: supporting teaching in the new role', I analysed the narrative via the methods outlined above and used key quotes to highlight elements which offered insights that revealed aspects of areas under investigation – 'quotations from participants are included to illustrate the ways in which elements of identities are mobilized' (Willig, 2008, p. 63). The two principal areas mentioned above are considered in more detail in Chapter 5 where the aim of the discussion is to provide a 'convincing account of the nature and quality of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under investigation' (ibid.): the ways in which the respondents spoke of their experiences and articulated elements of their changing identities within the interview context.

Summary

The discussions throughout this chapter highlight key considerations and rationale for the methodological aspects of the study. They also outline the ways in which the pilot study contributed valuable insights which formed and shaped the main phase of the research. The chapter has also provided arguments and rationale for the varied and many considerations with regard to aspects such as sample,

research site, ethical concerns, data analysis and presentation that were necessary in order to effect the research in a methodologically robust manner. This resulted in a rich data set which revealed a number of insights in terms of the research questions (Clough, 2002). The findings and discussion regarding the conclusions reached are outlined in the following two chapters.

Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter discusses the main findings that emerged from the study and is followed by a discussion in Chapter 5 on the ways in which these findings linked to the literature. The discussion within this chapter examines the teaching identities of the individuals and how they are evolving and changing in response to the needs of the sector, institution and their students. It highlights the issues that are being played out as new identities emerge, exploring the feelings of the individuals, looking at ways in which they are coping with change, reasons for resistance, and their views of the way forward for teaching online. The chapter amalgamates themes and issues with insights into areas of professional need and future learning, with reference to the framework for professional learning discussed in the literature review and shown below as Figure 4.1. The recommendations and insights are then discussed in the concluding chapter of this study.

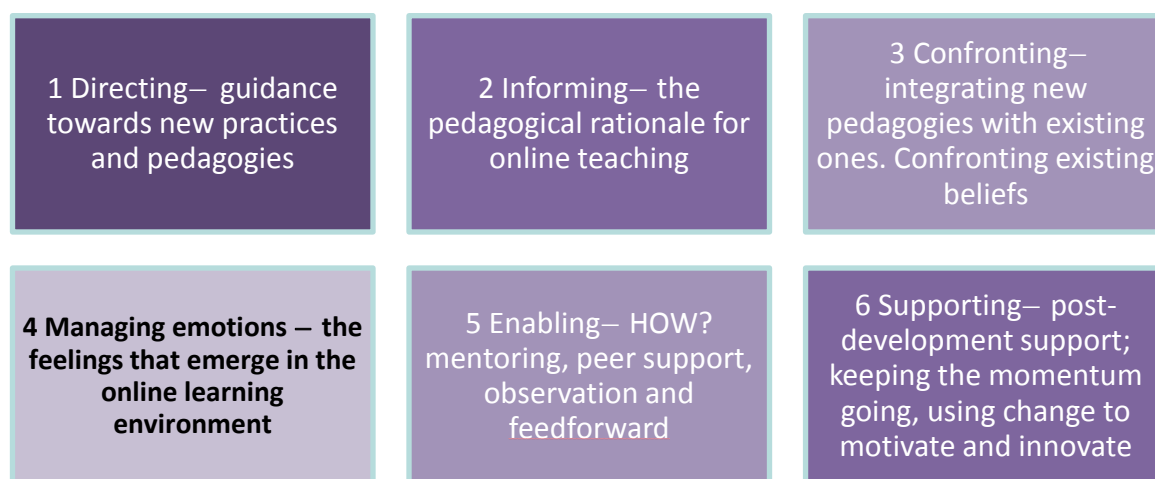


Figure 4.1 Framework for professional learning (Source: adapted from Heron, 1999)

The first section of the chapter looks at the ways in which teaching identities evolve and are expressed. It explores evidence that suggests there are key differences between online and face-to-face teaching identities and considers the ways in which individuals are attempting to bridge the gap. The following research questions are discussed.

The nature of teaching identities

- 1 What are teaching identities and how do they manifest?

The changing nature of teaching identities

- 2 Is there evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment?

The chapter then explores feelings of professional effectiveness and the ways in which these are inculcated into an online role, examines how lecturers perceive their online role, and looks at the type of professional learning that they feel has made a difference to their practices. It also considers the limitations and frustrations that they are experiencing and their thoughts on what type of professional learning it would take to overcome these barriers. This part of the chapter principally explores and discusses the third research question.

Preparing for a new teaching role

- 3 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?

Finally, the chapter investigates and discusses the lecturers' sense of community and support. The areas that they feel gain most support, and the communities in

which they feel included. It examines perceptions of more formal support initiatives, such as mentoring, online observations and feedback, and professional dialogue, and looks at areas for development and future support. It addresses the following research question.

Supporting teaching in the new role

- 4 What professional learning have teaching staff experienced that has contributed to their feelings of professional effectiveness in an online role?

This section also attempts to unpack particular areas in which online identities are being formed and the stumbling blocks that prevent lecturers from feeling fully integrated and at home within their environment. It also examines possible ways in which this knowledge may be used to inform future professional development and leads into the concluding section of the literature review, concomitantly leading into the concluding chapter, and providing data which explores the final research question.

Lessons for the higher education institution

- 5 How can the above be used to inform professional learning of part-time higher education teachers working within a VLE based upon the principles of social constructivism?

(Note: Because of the nature of identity research, in terms of the ways in which different aspects of identity merge and meld to produce the whole, there are some areas of overlap between sections. Where this occurs these points have been taken forward for discussion in the concluding chapter.)

The evolving nature of higher education teaching identities

This section explores what teaching identities are and how they manifest. It also looks at whether there is evidence to suggest that the teaching identities of an online teacher differ from that of a teacher in a face-to-face environment.

The literature review highlighted a number of facets pointing to the existence of face-to-face teaching identities and the ways in which these play out within the narratives of individuals. These stories created a sense of present and future teaching identities (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Many of the stories began with insights into the ways in which individuals came into part-time teaching with the OU and comments revealing what they felt the role would entail. The insights are important as they offer indications of what individuals perceive to be the most attractive and engaging elements of the job of an associate lecturer working for the OU, and the way in which these expectations influence their initial contacts with their student group. The experiences varied. Some respondents had been encouraged to apply for the role after having had very positive experiences of attending and teaching at summer residential schools:

I went to a party and met someone who was at the OU and they said, oh, come and do summer school. So I did, and I thought, this is brilliant, like Woodstock! And because of that, I signed up to be an AL [associate lecturer] thinking it would somehow be like summer school but it wasn't.

(Mark 1)

Once established as a part-time lecturer, the above respondent found that the type of student that he was teaching was different: more rewarding to teach than in other teaching situations:

I started as an AL in 1992, I love the students, I just found OU students great, I thought, this is proper stuff, this is what I should be doing. It's so refreshing when people bring stuff you've never heard of before; like life, the universe. Teaching is like a quiet revolution; giving people knowledge that they wouldn't have got any other way.

(Mark 1)

Other respondents came into higher education teaching because of their own experiences as a student at the OU:

I began my teaching career in grammar and comprehensive schools and became particularly interested in teaching literacy to the less able. I studied for the OU Reading Diploma and spent several years as Head of English in a middle school. I took my MA with the OU in curriculum, learning and assessment, so I found out what it was like to be an OU student. Then we were inspected at school and we were told we needed to do more for gifted and talented children, and I thought, why don't I do that for a doctorate? So I ended up doing my doctorate with the OU as well. Then I became a tutor for them.

(James 2)

I liked the tutorials I went to when I started out at the OU. We were all at sea at once and the most valuable part of the session was the coffee break,

when you could have a chat to others about any problems you were having with essays etc. Then you came away feeling a bit more motivated, and the distance didn't seem so lonely.

(Maria 1)

Jenny came into OU tutoring because of her own negative experiences as a learner; she determined to make a difference to the learning experiences of her students:

I have sat through so many lessons and so-called training sessions both in my own language and also in English, and thought; how much longer do I have to be here? I really felt I hadn't understood a thing. I applied for the OU job because I'd heard that it was a really interesting teaching environment. I helped out at a day school first and thought, I could do that, I could be a tutor here. So I applied and was nervous at the interview, but I finally got accepted and started to teach. I do like it, but it's not like the day school; the students are more critical of the materials and things once you get into the course. That can be hard sometimes.

(Jenny 1)

The experience of having had a 'taster' of what it may be like to be an OU tutor seemed to be a powerful motivating force for then going on and applying for the job; particularly influential in terms of the way that it created a vision of what it would be like to teach for the OU as evoked through these experiences.

Participants had often had the opportunity to try out the teaching in a day or residential school situation, and found that they enjoyed the experience. These events also availed them of opportunities to observe experienced tutors and be

able to reflect on good and poor aspects of their teaching. They often referred back to this when it came to their own practices. There was also a feeling that teaching for the OU offered an important opportunity to change people's lives, that there was a key ethical core to the motivation to teach, and that the respondents believed, in different ways, that they would be able to make a difference to students' lives within the teaching role. This echoes what Macfarlane and Hughes (2009, p. 54) call the 'secret garden effect', a metaphor that keys into the complexity, multifaceted and intensely personal nature of the teaching role, a role that is emotionally charged and engenders high levels of personal investment. It also offers insights into the participants' professional ethics, and how these may be compromised or need to be adapted in the online environment. This keys into the hegemonic aspects of identity and is important in relation to the findings discussed earlier.

Louise's experiences reflect the type of apprenticeship that she went through in order to become a fully-fledged OU tutor. Her experiences, similar to Jenny's, reflect on the importance of modelling within the building of a teaching identity (Day, 2004; Alsup, 2006), and the way in which the building of a salient teaching identity represents the fulcrum of a successful student learning experience:

I didn't have any professional teaching qualifications, what I did have and what I have are HE [higher education] qualifications and I was very interested after my own experiences of HE and what I thought it could do for me, in sharing that with others. So in around '97, I had the opportunity to have some experiences at residential school, which I found enormously rewarding, because it was only a few years after I got my honours degree. For me, it was about teaching, yes, but also my experiences of being a

student; I shared those with the students there, and that, I think was what made it so rewarding.

(Louise 2)

Louise's experiences of residential school were slightly different to other participants. She relished the opportunity of being able to share her recent experience as a student, with other students on the course. This is important in terms of teaching identities and the ways in which they relate to the individuals' experiences of being a student. In Louise's case her very recent experience of being an undergraduate in a distance learning environment proved key to her feelings of self-salience in the residential school teaching situation. In terms of the hierarchy of needs alluded to in the literature review (Salmon, 2002), and also articulated with regard to lecturers' needs from the online environment, Louise quickly attained the state of 'self-actualisation', or an ability to fully immerse herself in the teaching situation. As a result of this, Louise rapidly orientated herself within the environment by her ability to empathise with the student's viewpoint; however, her elevated educational status (by nature of her degree), and new pedagogical role, offered her the self-esteem she needed in order to feel that she was performing a useful role. She knew what was required from the teaching of the subject by virtue of the fact that she herself had had such recent experiences of studying it; and had insight into the feelings of cognitive dissonance being experienced by her students. This aspect of teaching is important for the online environment, as many lecturers come to online teaching with little or no experience of having been an online student. This effectively means that they are not only grappling with the new technologies in the pedagogical sense as teachers, but have little insight into what it feels like to be negotiating this territory as a student. This is a theme that arose during the literature review within the

discussion on the tutor moderator's course (Macdonald, 2006). A discussion of respondents' feelings about this type of professional learning features later in the chapter.

Keying into Macfarlane's assertion of teaching as an immensely personal experience (2004), early on in the narratives, realised key indications of the ways in which teaching was envisaged. Not as an exercise purely confined to the classroom, but one which overlaps into different elements of teachers' lives, drawing on both beliefs and hegemonies that underpin actions and practices in other areas of their lives, other identities, and using these to inform their fundamental beliefs about what it means to be an online educator. A good number of these appeared to be core to individuals' ideas of what constitutes both teaching and education.

Again, this raises the question of the extent to which ethical approaches are transferable to the online environment: whether the intensely personal nature of teaching can still be said to hold true when working online. If this ethical core is not to be compromised by online working, we need to get to the root of exactly why and how effective professional learning can be designed to overcome this. In terms of the framework for professional learning this is an important consideration within stage 3, 'confronting' (see Figure 5.1 above), and also in terms of examining what keeps motivation for teaching levels high in an online environment.

Louise highlights this as she talks about the reasons why she came into the role. Speaking of her interest in how learning takes place and elaborating on her curiosity as to how this learning affects people's lives. In her case, her passion and curiosity for learning and the ways in which people learn was enhanced by her

own experiences of her children learning and how this had had a profound effect on them as they grew older:

I have an interest in learning and I had a very varied background before I came into the OU, both in terms of study and also in terms of my working background. I think my interest in learning stems from school experiences and, not always positive ones. But to go back to the positive ones, well, they were always when someone was interested in me as a whole person, not just in terms of my learning, but also how my learning fitted in with me as a person, rather than just a person who could learn some facts. I also brought my children's experiences as learners to the table. Where they were most interested in learning went far deeper than just learning facts and doing worksheets, it was when the learning connected with them as people, where they could come out of school and start relating it to their lives. That's our job in the OU. At least that's how I see it.

(Louise 1)

Louise goes on to describe the impact of early professional learning on her experience and perception of the role, talking about ways in which her teaching identity evolved and why this early professional development was important, which keys into ideas in the literature review on the importance of early development opportunities (Banks and Shelton Mayes, 2001):

I think I was very fortunate to have some very good mentors when I started out at residential school (because that's how I got involved). These people were very keen to share best practice with me. These were Course Directors and other teaching staff, so it wasn't just me being green and

keen! It was really down to the fact that people were willing to share and offer advice, to be good role models. They also treated me as if I wasn't green and didn't know anything; they treated me as a colleague from the start. They were so confident in their practices that they were willing to share.

(Louise 1)

The comment made by Louise with respect to colleagues being 'confident in their practices' and 'willing to share' is important from a number of perspectives. It offers insight into the ways in which confident practitioners are willing to share and offer 'expertise' to newcomers, encouraging them to become part of the community of practice and not remain on the periphery of their subject (Wenger, 2000). This will also be important later on in the discussion, in terms of how this arrangement plays out in the online environment where the number of experienced online practitioners is lower and the research bank into online pedagogies, although growing, is still in its infancy.

In addition, it raises the question of whether experienced online teachers do have the bank of knowledge necessary to offer the newcomer to this field a coherent and confident enough learning experience, or whether the quality of that teaching is perceptibly less effective due to the limited experience (compared to face-to-face and blended methods), of those facilitating development opportunities. In the context of the framework for professional learning it links with stages 5 and 6, 'enabling' and 'supporting' in the online environment (see Figure 5.1 above). It also raises questions as to how these online mentoring programmes can be made to be effective, particularly in light of the challenges inherent within them, even in a face-to-face environment (Gosling, 2005a). Remarks made by participants about

how they came to work for the organisation and what their early experiences were like key into the importance of early professional learning and development (Banks and Shelton Mayes, 2001). Their early learning and development experiences were, by and large, very positive and certainly seemed to not only engage but also encourage them to progress further within the role.

There were also indications of some negative experiences at other institutions. Sam contrasted his while working at another university with his experiences at the OU, outlining ways in which good professional development enhanced his practice overall and gave him a sense of purpose and feelings of self-salience: the feeling that he was doing a good job:

I've had a great deal of support from the OU and relatively little through my other university, perhaps because of the character of the two organisations. More or less the attitude of my other university was; if you know the subject then just go and do it. That was a bit the case with the OU early on, then they seemed to get their act together and suddenly there were loads of staff development events organised in the regions.

(Sam 1)

Sam's comparative experiences of professional learning and support gave him a basis from which to analyse the ways in which both institutions were offering support. This broader overview contributed the shaping and forming of his expectations. In this case, in such a way that he continued to engage with OU work, even though at the beginning he judged the support to be below par. He drew most comfort by rapidly moving into a support role himself. This not only gave him a heightened feeling of belonging to the University but also offered a

valuable opportunity to see how others were coping with similar roles across the organisation:

I was the co-coordinator for a course that helped ALs to develop as teachers. I led that in the Midlands for about 4 years and it really got me into the world of how to teach and what teaching was all about. It was also all about how to get others to reflect on their learning and teaching, so my own practice moved much more into how people learn, perhaps with less emphasis on the subject. It's been a second career for me because I wasn't looking at how I was going to climb the greasy pole; I already did that in my first career. It was, and is, about how much satisfaction I get out of feeling that I'm doing a good service for the students.

(Sam 1)

This element of doing a good service keys into a number of researchers' ideas of reasons why students progress (York, 1999; Tinto, 2007). It combines both the teaching element and the means by which teaching is delivered to form a service-orientated package in which it is stated that all elements need to be integrated in order for it to be perceived as effective.

The realisation that teaching was about more than delivering an education within the subject permeated all of the narratives and seemed to be brought about largely through observing the practices of experienced tutors. Tutors who, in some cases, offered a very different perspective compared to respondents' original thoughts about what teaching for the OU would entail:

I was a little naïve I suppose, I had tried secondary teaching and didn't like it, I couldn't stand the crowd control elements. When I came to the OU I

thought, right this time it will be all about the subject. There'll be no crowd control issues so I'll just be able to deliver what I want to deliver. But, it was different, because these people came with different experiences which sometimes challenged the learning; challenged what I'd thought would be a given.

(Sam 1)

Sam's perspective is an interesting one, both in terms of his use of the word 'delivery', evoking a rather didactic view of teaching, and in terms of his feelings of 'what would be a given'. His view of 'a given', in this situation, suggests that he originally thought that the material he would be teaching would be delivered and accepted without question. For a constructivist way of teaching and learning design (Bruner, 1997) this raises some interesting questions about the nature of online learning. For the institution, it indicates a need for development opportunities to offer future teachers the chance to explore the very nature of the thinking behind online constructivist teaching, so that hegemonies can be addressed at stage 1, 'directing', of the framework for professional learning, while providing information (stage 2, 'informing'), which may provide an easier and less disturbing and dissonant entrée for the alignment of hegemonies with present role demands (which fits in with stage 3, 'confronting').

Maria offers a different perspective: she came into the job because she had enjoyed elements of teaching within her management role and felt that the knowledge and skills were transferable. She felt comfortable in going into a role which would offer elements that she enjoyed in her day job:

The reason I wanted to be a university teacher was because I loved speaking to groups in my day job. I used to give papers at conferences

which I greatly enjoyed, and, I thought, this is good, bringing people together and furthering my understanding of what makes them tick. I also thought I'm good at that so I'll be a good teacher; I'd already had some experience of the role and sort of knew I'd like it.

(Maria 1)

This linking of past positive experiences to the new teaching role meant for Maria that she was not taking an untenable risk in entering this new arena. She had an idea of what being a higher education teacher might entail and was already confident that she would be good at it. In Maria's case this was not just conjecture, she had pinpointed elements of the role and created a process via which she successfully linked her existing professional identity to the new one, indicating that this identity was part of a trajectory (Beijaard et al., 2004). This was even more evident in the way she reacted when encountering early issues in her teaching; she was able to move forward and overcome them rather than turning back. Feeling that the investment in her time and identity would not, in the end, be worth the emotional and intellectual capital she was willing to invest, she overcame the point of metanoia articulated by Alsup (2006). Her incisive narrative encapsulates the thoughts that also ran through the minds of other associate lecturers interviewed within the context of the study:

It was actually a new world for me to enter. Obviously I had been in the academic world as a student but when it came to actually coming in as a lecturer, I felt at sea at first. I was very cautious at first, thinking that all of these people are cleverer than me because they're academics and I'm a mere manager. I also felt undermined because I felt that they had had help with teaching and I hadn't. So I suppose I just thought, that's how they are

better than me so I'm going to get more qualifications in teaching and then we'll be on a more level playing field. So that's what I did. I professionalised myself. I did a teaching course and then I went on to get a PhD and then ... I felt fully fledged.

(Maria 1)

In psychological terms Maria successfully bridged the point of metanoia, she negotiated the borderlands between feeling inexperienced and not quite up to the job, and becoming comfortable in her role, precisely because she was able to find a strategy to bridge the gap between what she knew and what she aspired to know; what she was and what she aspired to become. In this case, it was the linking of something she knew that she was good at and in which she had already invested a good deal of emotional capital: face-to-face presentations. She already had what Henkel (2000, p. 36) defines as 'the sense of the profession', and used this to bridge the gap between her actual and designated identities (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Even though she felt she was entering an environment in which she was discomforted by the thought that people may be cleverer than her, her successful experiences in her previous professional field meant that she was able to find a way to build on this, moving into uncharted waters without completely losing sight of the familiar. In terms of online teaching the need to be able to integrate areas of particular strength into the online environment is key to successful identity integration, creating a bridge between present and past identities and feeling agentive in so doing (Gilligan, 1982, p. 122). In terms of gaining a sense of the profession, individuals need to have both the skills necessary to perform well in the role, and a sense of the core elements of that profession; not only what do I do but who am I to my students?

Maria's comments also provide some interesting insights into what associate lecturers like to be called an important part of anyone's identity. She wanted to be known as 'an academic', and her managerial identity began to take second place when she entered the world of higher education; she perceptibly felt it had less currency than the role to which she aspired. In terms of online teaching this poses some interesting questions. Will a fully online role diminish what it means to be a higher education teacher, problematising notions of academia and possibly creating a division within the profession between those who teach online and those who are involved in face-to-face interactions? Will it create an internal institutional isomorphism which divides and dilutes the higher education teaching profession (Macfarlane, 2010)? And will this lead eventually to the two types of teaching creating two distinctly separate types of academic or will the adaptations required to teach online become part of an ever expanding range of skills needed to teach in higher education? This last question is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter when the study examines the particular skills and persona that the participants feel are required to teach effectively online.

The discussion of how associate lecturers see themselves is often the subject of much discussion within their common room (an online forum in which associate lecturers discuss subjects of their choice). It was also raised by colleagues at the University of Strathclyde after I gave a paper on this research (Baxter, 2010). Names and titles are important; with the power to both integrate and marginalise in order to provide intrinsic feelings of integration the online teaching role may need to consider a title which may fully reflect the idea of academia, while also integrating the subtle differences of the particular skills needed for this type of teaching.

Conclusion

This section has highlighted the importance of perception and bridging capacities in both the engagement and the retention of new staff. An accurate initial role description which offers a realistic idea of what the job is going to entail in order to attract individuals to feel that the investment of time and a certain measure of cognitive dissonance will eventually bring about the capacity to perform the role in an effective and professionally satisfying way. Thus giving them a role which aligns with their own perceptions of what it means to be a higher education teacher. The discourse simultaneously highlights early professional learning as the fulcrum of staff engagement and retention, alongside the possibility of modelling and emulating successful and confident practitioners. These are opportunities that will need to translate readily to the online environment but which will emerge as challenges for the institution, the subject area and the individual.

In terms of the framework for professional learning, the discussion has gone some way to unpacking the type of intrinsic hegemonies and motivations that play out in the process of identity work, highlighting stage 3, 'confronting', of the framework and its capacity to address these elements. This will be an important consideration in the final chapter when the study looks at how the institution can help teachers to confront existing knowledge and amalgamate it with new.

Preparation: supporting teaching in the new role

This section explores research questions 3 and 4. Therefore it will look at what type of professional learning teaching staff have experienced that has contributed to their feelings of professional effectiveness in an online role, and the ways in

which part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice as defined by Lave (1988) and Lave and Wenger (1991), examining the importance of this in terms of their professional learning.

Coping with change; evolving cultures

Si vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi.⁸

(Di Lampedusa, 1958)

The quote sums up the contradiction inherent within the narratives. The feeling that working within the teaching context is at present largely a satisfying experience while also acknowledging that in order for it to remain so, everything must change. It conjures up a sense of the ephemeral, reflecting the feeling that some of the vital and most vibrant and intellectually stimulating qualities of teaching may be lost. Combining the sense of the pluripotentiality of the online environment with the feelings that compared to the colourful, multidimensionality in the face-to-face teaching environment, the online experience may well be comparatively achromatic.

According to current research and as discussed in the literature review, learning is linked strongly to identities and identities are formed through learning within communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). But as the higher education teacher's role evolves what do communities of practice feel have most impact on their learning and identities and how does the learning play out within these communities? An additional question discussed within this chapter centres around

⁸ If we want everything to remain as it is, it will be necessary for everything to change.

issues of self-salience, or the feeling of doing a good job while teaching online. Linking this to the type of social and professional learning opportunities that are currently available to higher education teachers concomitantly reveals learning areas which individuals indicate would help them to achieve professional autonomy and salience in the online teaching environment.

Feedback is an important part of professional learning and reflection (Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984). But what type of feedback is most influential in terms of the salient online teaching identity, and how is this achieved in the online environment? There are many different forms of feedback available to the OU lecturer: formal feedback surveys by students (developing associate lecturers), formative feedback gained by ad hoc questions during class, as well as summative feedback as defined by student success levels.

Mark explores his feelings about student feedback and doing a good job:

I always feel guilty about not doing a good job. I had a tutorial on Saturday that went really badly, the first one, the first couple went really well, but this one, I just didn't feel it went well. It's not about the formal feedback, that's good, but it's more about the type of feedback that you get in a face-to-face situation. I can tell by body language, you know, and I always have a review discussion at the end of the tutorial. I ask people, and, you know, you can fish then and see what concepts they've actually got and ... I'm very much a behaviourist, I don't think that learning has happened unless I hear them use phrases and expressions that have come out during the session.

(Mark 2)

The belief that formal methods of student feedback are not necessarily a measure for learning has repercussions in terms of Mark's professional identity. He feels that unless he can see evidence from his students, via their body language and/or their use of terminology, then evidently they have not learned. He sets out very clearly the evidence that he requires in order to make him feel that he has done what he set out to do. Formal feedback in terms of feedback sheets or even student comment is, in his case, largely irrelevant to his feelings of professional salience. This may be an issue in terms of the online environment if a greater emphasis is to be put on formal feedback systems such as DALs.⁹ Translating this face-to-face feedback into the online environment has implications about how students express their learning online, and for the ways in which online questioning can elicit this type of qualitative feedback, which is clearly so important to lecturer identity.

Anna compares her experiences of working in an online residential school with those of her experiences at a face-to-face residential school for the same course. She reflects on the ways in which this impacted on her feelings of professional satisfaction and on her feelings not only about the learning but, more precisely, about what type of learning was taking place:

I am a real advocate of online, but can I just say that the online case study, doing it online over a period of between five and six weeks, as opposed to doing it at residential school, is nothing, absolutely nothing like the same experience, for either me or them. They don't get the same learning; they

⁹ Developing Associate Lecturer feedback. An institutional system for feedback on teaching and associate lecturer performance, implemented for both formative and quality assurance reasons.

don't get the same social experience, and the learning experience.

Whereas at summer school they would turn up and some of them would be a bit, I've just had to give up three days of my holidays for this, or my partner's had to take three days off to look after the children so I could do this, but by the end of the session, nobody wanted to go home! They had all bonded and they could have written a whole essay about what they'd learned during that time.

(Anna 1)

As their teacher, Anna found a number of frustrations in the online residential school experience as opposed to the face-to-face version:

They don't discuss issues on the same level, the engagement's all superficial rather than deep and the whole thing just seems like a chore to them.

(Anna 1)

Mari, too, expressed her frustrations at the level of learning that appeared to go on in an online residential school:

It's so superficial and all such a bore for the learners, and to be their teacher feels equally frustrating. Because they can't interact in the same ways with each other, it's all down to me to try and provoke that deeper type of learning; that's hard work with a group of 20 and the feeling that you have to address each one on an individual basis before the light dawns. And engaging people online, I've never been taught how to do that.

(Maria 2)

Unpacking why the online experience seemed so comparatively superficial compared to the face-to-face one keys into definitions of the curriculum that were discussed during the literature review. The feeling that fully online learning addressed only one aspect of the curriculum was echoed by a number of respondents. The programmes of learning appeared to address the formal or advertised curriculum, but failed to address the other and equally, if not more, important areas within the informal and hidden curriculum. The additional contextual, social and political insights that emanate as a result of bringing together a number of people with different experiences and teaching them within the context of the institution (Armitage et al., 1999).

This also keys into what brought Mark and colleagues into the University in the first place (see above, the section on the evolving nature of teaching identities), subsequently forming an important part of their continuing engagement with their students. However, the gap may well be a perceptual one. As mentioned earlier, teacher knowledge is difficult to pin down and expert knowledge difficult to articulate (Schon, 1983; Banks et al., 1999). It may be that the strategies that were used and professionalised in order to open up the learning to encompass extra dimensions may need to be re-articulated in the context of online working. It may be that teachers have not articulated this element of their practice, and that, perhaps, via the very act of articulating their knowledge and experiences in this area, they may well be able to feel more confident that they are delivering the multidimensional experience that they felt to be a feature within their face-to-face working. Again, this ties into stages 1–3 of the framework for professional learning ('directing', 'informing' and 'confronting'), and will be explored in light of implications for the institution.

James echoed Maria's feelings in his reflections on the meaning of learning and his role in it:

When I tutored a fully online management course, I didn't like doing it at all. It was very prescriptive. We were given a script for every session and it was laid out how much time we should spend on it etc. I didn't enjoy it at all; I spent so much time thinking, am I going to remember doing the next thing that I couldn't concentrate on what the students were really learning. I spent so much time concentrating on what I was doing that I missed the feedback and insights that may have been coming out of the student learning.

(James 2)

James's experiences hearken back to feelings commonly experienced by new teachers: 'An over concentration on the teaching with relatively little emphasis on the learners' experience' (Minton, 1991, p. 10). It implies that there may be evidence to suggest that the new online role has a far greater impact on teaching identities than initially suggested. In James's case, his feelings of powerlessness and the inability to relate to the online environment imply a need for quite substantial intervention in terms of professional learning, in order to overcome these feelings of being taken back to a point in his career that he had been through some years previously.

The need to feel creative and to be able to adapt sessions to suit the students permeated the interviews. James linked creativity with the ability to not only 'background' course materials but also innovate according to the needs of that particular cohort:

What I like about tutorials and discussions is, to a certain extent, up until now you could do what you wanted. Ok you get guidance and materials from the course team, but if I don't think they are appropriate for my students then obviously I'm going to devise something that I think my students need to know.

(James 1)

Louise had some very strong feelings about the ways in which she felt she was expected to interact with the new technologies:

For me there are issues in terms of my online resources, communication forums, whatever; it's that the facilitating or tutoring or whatever you call it online comes first and the online factor should meet those needs. Not the fact that we are trying to meet online needs and forgetting what our role is.

(Louise 2)

Feelings of the type of technological determinism alluded to by Turkle (1993) permeates the two narratives. Both respondents feel that the technologies are trying to drive them and that it should be the other way around. There are also indications that the environment feels as if it is stultifying creativity: rendering the teaching performance staccato and lacking in pace, innovation and cadence necessarily implemented by the teacher.

Maria's commentary goes some way to indicate the strength of feelings around this issue:

I just feel it's like putting one foot before the other, it's like learning to walk, and teaching wise I did that a long time ago; I feel as if I should be skipping and what I'm doing is a slow ponderous walk, and I'm only one step ahead of my students.

(Maria 2)

Marie's use of metaphor is central to her teaching identity, she's plodding, not skipping, she has created a metaphor for her teaching that is both pervasive and persuasive. This is a textual metaphor that will evolve as she evolves in the online environment. As discussed in the literature review, the unprompted use of metaphor is unusual in new teachers, who may need to be prompted to articulate their tacit knowledge in this way (Clandinin, 1986), and metaphors form important links between tacit knowledge, ethical stance and ideological frameworks (Bowers, 1980). So the use of metaphor is important in terms of professional development and has the potential to be used in mentoring relationships or in online skills-based courses in order to link tacit knowledge and underlying beliefs with new skills and attributes. It has particular power to inculcate the nascent identity in providing a powerful narrative tool with which to articulate where the teacher is now and where they aspire to be. In terms of the framework for professional learning, it has the potential for exploration and influencing in stage 3, 'confronting'.

Luke, an experienced lecturer in a number of universities, echoed James's feeling that creativity was about listening to the questions rather than the answers:

I listen to what they say and I like to observe them while they are saying it; that's the feedback I need to take the learning to the next level.

Luke's idea of taking the learning to the next level and the challenges of doing this in the online environment raised questions not only on the environment itself but also on the psychological centrality of the course content and web interface to the student experience.

How this affected learning and teaching identity and what inherently gave individuals the feeling of doing a good job differed according to whether they were teaching online or face to face. There were certainly indications that the online environment gave them opportunities to teach differently to the ways in which they taught face to face. For some, this presented arenas in which they could consciously try to become the type of teacher that they perceived to be effective, with skills that they had never quite managed to emulate in a face-to-face environment. In these cases, although the feedback from students was important, equally important was the teacher's self-perceived ability to be able to shape the teaching in a way which they believed to be more organised and professional than the way in which they would ordinarily teach. Listening to the discourse associated with this, offers interesting insights into the hegemonies or personal belief systems around what constitutes a good online teacher.

Jasper articulated this in his description of the ways in which he used email to communicate with students:

I'm just more organised when I respond to emails, I have more time to think than in a face-to-face situation, and when I give my reply, I'm able to embed links and other bits and pieces into the email, to provide a more

comprehensive answer. Of course, the big advantage is that you don't get sidetracked with a whole lot of personal stuff, which often happens face to face or particularly on the telephone.

(Jasper 1)

Louise, too, felt that the online environment had the effect of professionalising her practices, particularly within the context of her interactions with students in her online tutor group forum:

Online, it's more controlled, you can have a more precise answer, or a discussion, it's safer, more controlled, more contrived.

(Louise 1)

Louise's comments pointed up an underlying hegemony, which tends to suggest that she often felt threatened by the extent to which she was expected to give of her own personality and personal identity within the teaching situation. The centrality of the online interface and the professional distance this offered, in her case as in Luke's, afforded them the opportunity to assume a professionalism (or persona) that clearly delimited boundaries between their personal and professional identities. It also taps into key ideas around the use of language in the creation of identity in the online environment, a key area explored in the literature review.

Louise felt she had found a way to narrativise an element of her professional identity that she was unable to do in face-to-face teaching, by creating an online persona articulated via concise and precise responses to student queries. This increased her feelings of self-salience and also provided her with a psychological

anchor in her teaching: a metaphysical point of safety from which she could develop her relationship with the student. Louise had found a way to textually articulate her online identity and felt confident that this persona was effective in online teaching: she looked into her online mirror and liked what she saw.

Grace raised some interesting points in terms of the different types of professional identities offered by the variety of tools available through MOODLE. She holds a number of different roles within the OU: as a tutor on two courses and as a moderator in one of the largest student forums in the University. The ways in which she combines being a teacher on the one hand and a moderator on the other and the manner in which the two roles impact differently on her teaching identities, go some way to illustrating the different mantles that one teacher can assume within divergent environments and the ways in which these synthesise to produce a holistic online teaching identity. She talks about the differences between moderating a very large online course forum and engaging with her own tutor group:

I think that on the forum, although I don't get involved to the same extent within my tutor group, you really have to think through what you say. Whilst it may be, you know, one person asking a question on there, you have to be aware that there may be another thousand people listening to the answer. It's not confidential and while I've used informal language to a student on a one-to-one basis, on the forum it tends to be a lot more formal. I think that the real issue comes to expressing emotion or humour; sometimes I'll respond to something quite seriously and they'll say, oh I was joking, actually. But they haven't put emoticons or anything like that in there, so

how am I supposed to know. That then gets embarrassing, and you can't delete it or anything, or you lose face even more.

(Grace 2)

The feelings of permanency and being scrutinised in the realm of online forums were amplified by those who were using Facebook® to create feelings of community and subject-specific communalities. Sam sums this up:

On Facebook®, you make a comment and it's there; not just there for the lesson or online session, it's there forever. Same with Elluminate®, you offer them a transcription and there they are, your silly comments, the ones that didn't work and the questions that you failed to answer. Ok so the good things are on there too ... but you know how people perceive things; they'll always tend to hone in on the bad.

(Sam 1)

This keys into Crystal's comments (2006) about the shame that individual's feel when they examine their own online identities or, rather, when they reflect upon the online identities that they have articulated. The two perspectives are substantially different, the first keying into spontaneous articulation of identity (with perhaps little thought of how this may be perceived), the second standing back and seeing themselves in the way that a student may see them. Although this is uncomfortable for the individuals above, in terms of this study it is a key insight. It indicates that lecturers are beginning to reflect not only on their responses, but on the ways in which they articulate their identities. They are becoming more online self-aware and moving from a purely responsive mode into one in which they are becoming aware of deficiencies in the ways in which they are portraying

themselves online. This creation of cognitive dissonance is a key indicator of readiness for a different type of professional development, although the participants are not able to articulate what type of development this would be. The explorations in the literature review point to the role of language and an indication that this is the point at which these individuals are ready and would be receptive to analysing their own online portrayals and keen to investigate linguistic strategies to enable heightened awareness of ways in which they can close the gap between how they appear to present, and how they would ideally like to present.

Issues of embodiment: changes, challenges and choices in online behaviour management and the creation of an online presence

As discussed in the previous section, Grace's narrative reveals some passionate feelings about the predominantly text-based environment online, honing in on issues discussed during Chapter 1 on the relative primacies of embodiment, nuance and gesture in higher education teaching. She, along with other respondents, questioned their ability to create a strong online presence and whether this implied one coherent professional identity or whether a number of identities were needed in order to fulfil the demands of the different environments. Respondents were divided on this, some feeling that there was no need to alter language and expression whether they were engaging on a forum, via email, on Elluminate® or some other application. Others felt very strongly that there was a need to promote different aspects of professionalism according to the environment. In both cases there were indications of strong hegemonic beliefs of what was expected by the institution, those beliefs often colouring individuals' responses:

I tried valiantly to engage my students in online fora, but I keep on failing, I don't know, is it me? Is it how I come over online, or is it just apathy? It would be really good to see how other people do it. Whatever I'm doing, I'm not doing it right.

(Louise 2)

Embodiment and online presence was also alluded to within the context of those who had tried applications such as Elluminate® and were able to contrast them with their experiences of using MUDs (Multi User Domains), such as Second Life®, or other gaming applications in teaching:

Lots of people aren't very good at keyboard skills; I'm one of them that's a barrier. If you're trying to concentrate on typing, particularly in a text chat room or similar, then the concentration on the typing can get in the way of the things you want to say. Elluminate® is a bit of, well, pulled apart reality; it's all over the place really. I think they've made it less human by putting in so many different screens and things. In a virtual world, at least it's all together, so you have a body, you can look at a screen, you can listen, so it's much more intuitively obvious how it goes, so long as you have really basic keyboard skills; and you have a few expressions as well.

(Mark 2)

Mark's reflections on body language resonate with James, who highlights another important but often sidelined aspect of teaching face to face:

I think that body language is very important because we all know that good teachers use it all the time, particularly for the difficult students, and there's

something called mirroring which is probably what a lot of teachers do to build a relationship with students.

(James 2)

James's allusion to mirroring, or copying elements of another's behaviour, and body language in order to create empathy (Morris, 1969), points to an area that could be adapted for the online environment. He points out how he already sees mirroring online:

There's a variety of ways that students start their emails; I always tell people to call me by my Christian name, sometimes its Dear James, sometimes its hi James, sometimes its Dear Dr Steel, well I try to mirror that back to the students. I think it's an effective way of creating a relationship.

(James 2)

This awareness of technique is a useful insight into the metacognitive processes inherent within teaching. Not just the how but the why and the reflection on how this impacts on teaching and learning. In this case, James had been teaching for many years and attained a very senior position within the teaching arena, so for him it was relatively easy to reflect on practice after so many years of teaching and teacher training in a large number of different contexts. But for less experienced teachers the process of this level of professional reflection can be an arduous and relatively unsatisfying procedure if done in isolation (Gosling, 2005b) and highlights the need for a structured and supported approach to professional development via reflection.

Embodiment was highlighted as an issue when students and tutor engaged in a complex interplay between telephone conversations, email and online forums. Marie's experiences reflect the ethical issues involved in moderating and teaching in an online forum, blending this with telephone and email interactions:

I do believe that you have as a tutor, you have some moral responsibility for your students ... but it's not always so simple ... I had an experience where I had to have a private word with one of the students because they were insensitive to one of the students in Greece. I could see that this was going to a place that we didn't want to go and we would have the student leaving and all sorts. So I stepped in and it turned out that he just hadn't noticed, he was totally oblivious to it and it wasn't anything malicious at all, and I hesitated ... should I, shouldn't I, should I just leave them to learn this out for themselves, the way you would in a classroom?

And then there was another incident. She'd handed in an assignment, I'd marked it and noticed that she'd missed out the whole of the last question. Then online she went on to say that she was getting married, and this was part of being a bit absent-minded. Then this guy joined in the conversation and he said oh great can this be an excuse for me, I'm getting married in June. At first I thought, this is great, the students are finally chatting on their own, like they would face to face. But then things started to go wrong, he made a comment, it was quite a throwaway comment, I really wasn't too sure what he meant. It was uncomfortable online, everyone went silent, and I thought, what would I do face to face?

I thought I would probably just come out with asking him what he meant, or perhaps I would know because of his expression. But online, there was silence, just 40 students and all wondering ... and a teacher that didn't know what to do. So I didn't reply, and that killed the conference; it never regained that level of informality again ...

That one comment killed it.

(Maria 1)

It is clear from Maria's experiences that her care and pastoral consideration for her students extends to feelings of responsibility for creating a safe and welcoming online environment (Macfarlane, 2006). Grace and Ruby are clear about how welcome messages and an initial outlining of boundaries can be used effectively at the start of the course. What seems to present difficulties is the manipulation of the environment when the going becomes tougher. Online behaviour issues appear to create the same challenging situations that occur within the face-to-face environment, but lack of embodiment creates real difficulties when it comes to handling those situations while simultaneously managing a productive online learning environment.

In a face-to-face environment the classroom climate changes constantly throughout the lesson, never predictable, constantly evolving, and it is precisely this climate that makes so much of teaching and learning enjoyable. The innate capacity for risk, the thrill of discovery (on the part of student and teacher), the ability to turn negatives into positive learning points (Minton, 1991; Wearmouth et al., 2004; Juwah, 2006). This links into earlier discussions on the role of metacommunicative competencies and ways in which linguistic strategies can

compensate for lack of paralinguistic and prosodic clues. Again revealing that some lecturers have reached a point at which they are stuck; they know that what they are doing is not enough for them, but they are not equipped with the strategies to be able to overcome this.

This offers an exciting opportunity for educational development, indicating that the incunabulum of online teaching is evolving and that professionals in the field are reaching a stage of heightened receptivity to new forms of professional development. As Minton (1991, p. 9) points out: '[L]earning is most effective at the point of need'.

So near and yet so far: issues of enhanced self-disclosure and linguistic register in online teaching

But if for some the online environment creates a web of conflicting discourses, for others it illuminates other aspects of engagement. Maria talks about the enhanced feelings of intimacy that online chatting seems to engender:

I used to chat online all the time. In the early days, before there was porno online, you could actually have a discussion with people. Even then, I noticed how friendly you got with people, which you wouldn't do if you met someone face to face – you disclose more and it's very quick. I don't know anything about the psychology of it, it's just like that, you know, these bits and bobs about people that you probably wouldn't pick up in a class situation.

(Maria 2)

Maria's observations link into Luke's comments around listening to online conversations he would rather not hear:

You wouldn't hear those personal student comments in an ordinary HE situation, you just wouldn't be party to them, but on a forum, there they are, in black and white for everyone to see. And what do you do once you've seen them? Ignoring comments are a bit easier face to face, you just give them a 'look' and they get the message. But how do you give a look online? Emoticons just don't do the job.

(Luke 2)

Wearmouth et al. (2004) outline a number of classroom management techniques in their book on addressing pupil behaviours in secondary classrooms, their insights and resultant frameworks the result of many years of research in this area. At the classroom level they make key recommendations and advocate interventions with regard to the following:

- The language of behaviour management.
- Strategies for improving classroom behaviour.
- Confrontation in the classroom and ways of dealing with this.

Class and learning management techniques form key elements of most postgraduate teaching courses but in terms of professional development in the online realm, opportunities that address these particular areas are still relatively rare and seem to assume that because the learners are adults that their behaviours will be straightforward to handle. But issues that arise online due to the environment, to mismatches of learning and teaching styles and to reactions, both

positive and negative, to teacher presence create problems in this area. Although Wearmouth writes largely about the secondary classroom, her observations around the language of classroom management are interesting if viewed as adaptable for the online environment. The interventions are summarised in Figure 5.2.

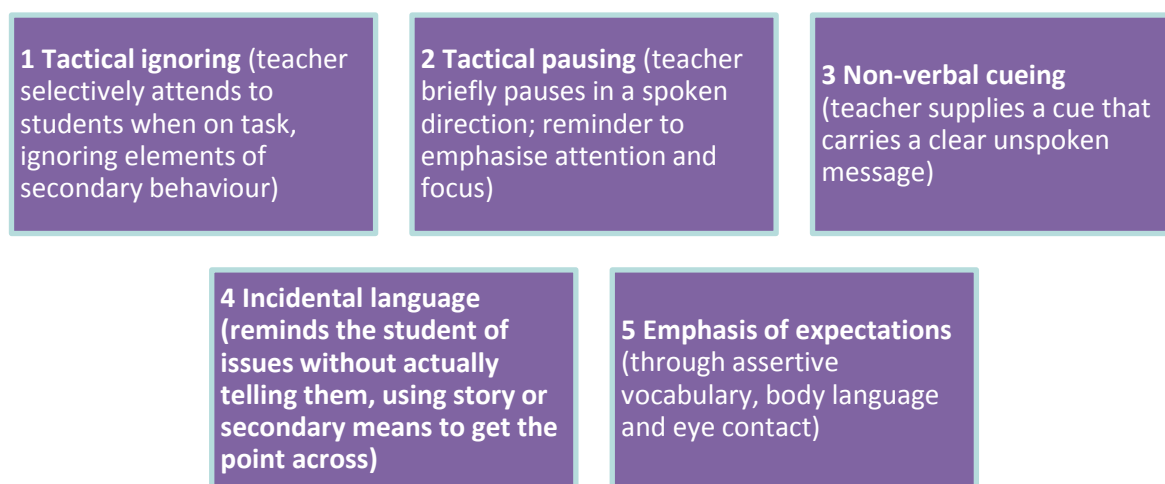


Figure 4.2 Online Group Management Techniques (Source: adapted from Wearmouth et al., 2004, p. 200).

Figure 5.2 highlights some interesting areas for developing the online role, bringing a greater psychological awareness to this teaching environment. This is relevant to the sector but has heightened relevance for The Open University in terms of its increasing engagement with younger students. In 2009 some 25% of the University's 20,000 students were within the 18–25 age range (Ashby, 2010), and an increasing emphasis on issues around student progression and retention, caused by the evolving educational and economic climate (Baxter, 2010), render this an important area for development.

Comments from participants in this study have demonstrated that issues of classroom management are not confined to the face-to-face environment, nor are they related to any particular age group. The associate lecturer induction booklet (Baxter et al., 2008), looks extensively at group work, drawing on established psychological models of the ways in which groups interact (Tuckman, 1965, p. 63), and outlines five key stages of group development: forming (group forms), storming (group roles allocated), norming (group roles settled and group begins to work towards a shared goal), performing (group carries out a shared task) and mourning (group go their separate ways). In terms of the evidence presented within this study, it would appear that a key area for professional development is within the context of the forming and storming phases of the online group, and how the lecturer can develop linguistic strategies to successfully overcome these key phases, moving the group on to continued and successful participation in online discussion.

Professional learning: views and perceptions of development

The penultimate section of this chapter explores and investigates the lecturers' sense of community and support: the communities in which they feel included and the areas where they feel they gain most support. It examines perceptions of more formal support initiatives such as mentoring, online observations and feedback, and professional dialogue, analysing areas for development. It addresses the fourth research question.

Supporting teaching in the new role
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- 4 In what ways do part-time higher education teachers feel part of communities of practice and what part does this play in their professional learning and identity development?

This section also attempts to unpack particular areas in which online identities are being formed and those stumbling blocks that prevent lecturers from feeling fully integrated and at home within their environment. It also examines possible ways in which this knowledge may be used to inform future professional development, leading into the concluding section of the literature review and the last research question.

Lessons for the higher education institution

- 5 How can the above be used to inform professional learning of part-time higher education teachers working within a VLE based upon the principles of social constructivism?

A sense of community or not?

The notion of communities of practice discussed within the context of the literature review and alluded to previously, permeated the narrative throughout the course of the interviews. The first part of this discussion concentrates on elements that attracted lecturers to work for the OU in the first place. Feelings of belonging and a sense of being part of a community were predominant throughout early days of teaching. Some respondents look back fondly to what they clearly felt to be the halcyon days of teaching within the institution:

I think of the things that really struck a chord with me in the early days when I first joined the OU back in the '80s, that was the camaraderie and friendliness and the huge opportunities that there seemed to be for professional development. The London headquarters then was in Finchley, in quite an old-fashioned rickety building, it was ... cosy and friendly; you go into Camden now and it's a load of locked doors.

(Jasper 2)

Jasper's use of the words 'a load of locked doors' provide a powerful metaphor to describe how he feels about current levels of collegiality and feelings of belonging within the University. Mark reflects on his feelings about the relationships he has with colleagues and how he feels about the tools made available within the MOODLE environment:

I used to keep in touch with tutors from summer schools, they would tend to be the people I'd email, and they are not even in the region. I tend not to use online tutor forums, I hate the system ... worst bit of kit I've ever seen in my life.

(Mark 2)

Mark's dislike of tutor forums is largely based on his dislike of the actual technology used to get online. But other lecturers' lack of enthusiasm for online communication with colleagues pointed to different reasons for their lack of engagement. Luke describes how his way of engaging with the world doesn't sit well with engagement in an online tutor forum:

The reason why I find it problematic is because I find it an awkward way; it doesn't suit the way I interact with the world. When I'm working online, I like hearing what other people have to say, and then I think; mulling that over, reflecting on that. Lots of online forums, including tutor forums, have, as their core, everyone throwing their opinion in, or a perspective, and I find it difficult to generate that in a vacuum. I would much rather see what people say and mull.

(Luke 2)

Luke's thoughts on how he likes to contribute may go some way to explaining why, even provided that much work and enthusiasm goes into getting tutors online, issues of continuing engagement remain problematic.

Grace articulates her feelings on her need for community and collegiality and the challenges that she and her colleague faced when trying to set up a community of online tutors via a wiki:

We tried to set up a wiki for our course, to support this idea of the community of practice, and it was just like flogging a dead horse. We tried so hard to get it going but my conclusion is that there is such a diversity of ALs that, I don't know, some people just see it as a bit of extra money and very focused on their day job. I have some community through my day job, but I think that if you only do the job of AL, like some do, then you really need more of a community spirit.

(Grace 2)

Grace was keen to promote online engagement and sharing of good practice but operating completely remotely she and her colleague found it very difficult. This contrasted with another tutor, Judy, and her experiences of working in a blended environment which combines some face-to-face interactions with online professional learning opportunities:

I think that if I'm honest, I use interactions far more with the VLE in my other university. The combination of staff development drop in events and the online material makes for a much greater sense of community.

(Judy 2)

It was clear from some respondents that when the climate was right the online forum had the potential to create a sense of community and support. Anna experienced some very positive online interactions with other tutors:

There's a tutor group on both of my courses, and there's a lot of interaction that goes on in there. You can raise pretty well any subject you like, to do with the course. I find that's very interesting and useful; you get advice from fellow tutors and the moderator. The fellow tutors are at the same stage as you, so that's good.

(Anna 2)

In her opinion the experience of engaging online with a community of which she clearly felt a part was a far cry from her experiences of engaging with more formal and structured professional learning events:

I found that formal training programmes were detached from the actual job of doing it. When I was in school with Baker Days, which we used to have then (in-school training days without the children), I could be brilliant without the children, full of ideas and marvellous approaches to the lesson plans and so on. But back in the classroom, if the children won't cooperate then it's absolutely useless. So it comes back to the people that you are teaching, and the actual situation that you are teaching them in. The theory can be marvellous but if it doesn't work in the particular context it's useless.

(Anna 2)

Anna's point on formal development events resonates with experiences of some of the other participants, like Mark for instance:

I've been to hundreds of staff development events over the years. I tend not to think of them as any use – apart from the technical ones like using the ETMA system. I've run online seminars, it's alright, it's ok, but then the students make it better than what it should be because the set-up's not quite right; the presentation could be better, the screens could be more intuitive ... But no, I've never been to a staff development event which was inspiring, yet.

(Mark 2)

Keying into the notion of inspiration links with notions of engagement and change management discussed in the literature review (Wenger, 2000), and links contextually with the processes and typologies of any programme of structured and effective change management (Kotter, 1995). The comments on formal development events seem to call into question how these events connect to the

big picture of potentialities and the future of online teaching and learning. It seems, as reflected in Chapter 4, that while elements of collegiality are largely satisfied by these events, the key elements of the big picture in terms of the future of teaching and learning and the associate lecturer role, the message may not be getting through as explicitly as it needs to be. This seems particularly so in terms of engendering the scale of buy-in to the changing nature of teaching and learning. A key insight emanating from institutional research into progression is that associate lecturers need a far greater degree of knowledge not only about the institution but also about their role within the institution and their agentic role within the future of teaching and learning online, in order to fully maximise the potentialities of both the medium and the organisational mission (Baxter, 2010).

Are the comments on lack of inspiration and the link to real-life practices due to the ways in which the events are 'sold' to prospective delegates? Or is it that the organisation has failed, so far, to create a vision of online teaching and learning that effectively taps into the ethical, psychological and social drivers that underpin online teaching identities? Buying into a vision of successful online teaching is important not only to individual teacher feelings of capability and self-efficacy, but also for the student and, concomitantly, the organisation. Lecturers need to be convinced that online learning is the way forward for enhanced, flexible and effective student learning. Ensuring that this can be pleasurable for both student and teacher is a key element in the ongoing motivation and retention of staff. The study, so far, has revealed key areas of concern within all three areas.

Reflections on the self

Some tutors found that formal online staff development events brought them into contact with tutors who were struggling with similar issues. While the course was running, they found levels of support to be encouraging. But lack of post-course support meant that for some the positive experiences were quickly forgotten as they became enmeshed in ongoing situations that they found difficult to remedy alone.

Judy, a psychology lecturer, tells of her feelings on engaging with an online course designed to develop and promote online moderating skills:

Science teachers are tetchy people, different faculties have different types of people in them, different ways of engaging. Social sciences and psychologists, we are very much more reflective and thinking about how much we want to engage, and why we should engage and that type of thing. By the time you've had all of these thoughts, you've done several hours' worth! I completed the course, but it was a real struggle, I was just doing the bare minimum to keep up. I don't know if anyone else has had that experience. I felt disempowered, if you had said to me at the beginning, I think this is going to be a hard course, you'll find it really tough going, I would have said 'oh don't be silly, I know about interacting on emails and it's just an extension of that, isn't it?' But I think it was trying to cope with all the different voices, the different identities, trying to get a picture of who the person was. I just lost the plot after a while.

(Judy 2)

Judy never met the other people on the course and this element she found difficult when the pace picked up and people began to post regularly. Sam compares this to contributing to an online political forum, in which apart from a small photo/logo there is no indication of who anyone really is:

I gave up after a while, all of these contentious statements and all of this stuff coming out and yet you never feel that you really get to know each other.

(Sam 1)

In terms of both Judy and Sam the actual online content came a poor second to the importance of positive interactions with others. A key insight in Judy's narrative is her comment about the fact that she didn't know if anyone else had felt the same as she did. If she had been able to discuss this with anyone, as you would in a face-to-face coffee break, then she may well have perceived the course to be more successful with regard to its outcome and impact on her practice. This links in with the insights discussed in Chapter 2, both in terms of what lecturers reflect on and in terms of how they reflect (Bell, 2001). It also highlights the need for opportunities to discuss learning in a safe and non-threatening environment. It isn't clear why the course in this case seemed to produce feelings of competition and why this also emerged as problematic within the sphere of tutor forums, articulated in both Sam's narrative and prevailing within several other interviews, but it does tend to point up insights discussed during the literature review, on online completion and one-upmanship (Crystal, 2006, p. 3). It also points once again to the need for further investigation with regard to the linguistic creation of an online classroom climate and how this can be used within staff development.

Yet the role of textual interaction is hardly a new one for the OU. Since its inception the organisation has honed the skills engendered with online and blended learning, that is, developed sophisticated systems for monitoring and supporting the development of the creation of a dialogue with the student. A dialogue formed through the medium of correspondence tuition, email, telephone communication and asynchronous communication tools such as Lyceum, a virtual classroom. But the issues outlined in the discussion up to this point would seem to indicate two key insights: the first, that there is a perceptual lack of bridging (in some cases) between the fully online environment and the blended teaching environment which has formed the greater percentage of teaching so far; the second, that the difficulty of successfully creating an online identity, as articulated via problems with online group management, issues with self-representation, and worries about appropriate dialogical register, self-disclosure and management of online discussions, both synchronous and asynchronous, is affecting both the motivation and the emotion of the online teacher. This is then creating a domino effect that impacts on the core ethics of what it means to be an online teacher.

Any effective future professional development needs to be able to address points, building on successful programmes that have been developed so far, and placing issues of identity at the heart of future development programmes and interventions. A key example of a framework which has existed for many years is the monitoring process whereby a lecturer receives feedback on their correspondence tuition, the way in which they mark assignments and give feedback and feedforward to the student (Gibbs and Habeshaw, 2002). Using this knowledge combined with an opportunity for reflection, not just as isolated practice confined to the formative and summative assessment processes but also as part of a bigger picture, also relates to the online relationship with the student. This is

not to say that this is not happening at present in the case of some lecturers but, rather, that making explicit the link between areas may help to create a 360-degree approach which has a positive impact on the online relationship between tutor and student, and which has a concomitantly positive effect on the ways in which the professional identity is narrativised.

Collegiality, opportunities to reflect and a safe place to practise skills, were thought to be key areas in which future programmes of development need to concentrate. Ruby reflects on her use of Elluminate® and her feelings on engaging via this medium:

I think that the danger of putting everything online is all to do with the value of speaking as a means of learning, because I'm sure you agree, we don't necessarily know what we think until we try to articulate it. That physical business of speaking in a tutorial, in pairs, a group or the whole group, I think it could be a different experience to contributing through a text-based application. I think that for some students, they need that ability to actually speak, and I think there's a difference between, say, speaking a response and forming a response through the act of speaking.

(Ruby 1)

The act of narrativising learning was also important for Maria, who saw the research interview itself as an opportunity to articulate the ways in which she was developing as an online tutor:

It's good to have a chance to talk, and think; yes, it's not very often that I get a chance to think. Thinking time is difficult to build in, but this has been good, sort of professional development in itself!

(Maria 2)

Insights offered by both statements again stress the difference between speech and its role in teaching and learning, and the role of written interactions. Again keying into the need for enhanced development into the ways in which communication is used within online teaching and learning.

The role of professional reflection was also raised within the context of mentoring, peer support and observation. The literature review discussed the ways in which early face-to-face interactions in terms of mentoring support and modelling played an important part in engaging and motivating lecturers. This facet was also highlighted with regard to ongoing development. Grace talks about her feeling of being alone, and her feeling that the organisation takes an ambivalent view of her professional development with a formal feedback system that, in her view, fundamentally fails to take account of the key and most important elements of any teaching development feedback system:

My wish list would be for ALs to have some sort of performance management review, because although we have this system, which I'm a little sceptical about, partly because some of the people that will be giving me feedback about me and my teaching will never have met me, refuse to contact me, and I don't think they are the best people to be commenting on me. One interesting point this year is I met a student whose boyfriend had done the course previously with me and absolutely hated me. But he'd

never spoken to me! I had emailed him a couple of times, but he didn't like the marks I gave him, so he had a really bad impression of me. She said that I was the best thing since sliced bread and thought my feedback was fantastic. It was really interesting because, presumably, she can't understand why he felt like that, because she feels that he probably got the feedback but didn't engage with it. Those people have had the same input really, but their comments are very different. I don't think that students who haven't engaged with their tutor should carry as much weight feedback wise as those who have.

(Grace 2)

Grace goes on to speak of the ways in which she feels that the organisation could more effectively use her experience and knowledge in a more joined-up fashion:

In nine years no one has ever sat me down and asked me what my professional plans are; would I like to do more courses, would I like to do less, how would I like to develop? All of the things that I have done, prisons, tutoring, advising, open events, I've just sort of taken those opportunities as they have appeared in my inbox, or as I happened to have them passed on by someone. I would like to think that every couple of years a staff tutor might take the time to bring you in for a couple of hours and say, ok, what's going well, what's not going well, would you like to be a mentor, would you like to be doing marking, would you like to be moderating forums, just things like that. I think that would help me, make me feel more valued.

(Grace 2)

Ruby amplified Grace's comments in terms of feeling that the role was rather fragmented:

Now I don't even keep up to date with how the modules that I teach fit in with the rest of the programme. If that sort of question comes up in a tutorial, I hope that someone else in the group will answer it, because they usually do. There is talk of it all coming together again, but the regs are so complicated now you couldn't know all of the ins and outs so you don't attempt to.

(Ruby 1)

Grace clearly feels that the lack of cohesion across the University creates issues for her in terms of her own motivation. The dominant hegemony permeating both discourses is one of a prevailing lack of organisational interest in lecturer motivation and development at a fundamental level. Although there were many positive comments on the amount of professional development available to associate lecturers, the nature of both the development and the extent to which it impacts on the teaching identities and feelings of professional salience was called into question.

Professional reflection linked to professional observation was raised as a key area for development. No one that took part in this study had been observed in an online situation but many had taken part in face-to-face observations as part of either professional dialogue or mentoring processes. Some participants were also acting as monitors, a role which involves commenting on the marking of other tutors. This was found to be a professionally satisfying role which offered perspectives and insights into both monitoring and the person being monitored.

The opportunity to be involved in more than one aspect of the teaching role was seen as a positive one. There were clear indications throughout the narratives that lecturers found that the more multidimensional their role, the more professionally satisfying it was. Grace articulates her frustration at having taught a course for a number of years, yet never having been given the opportunity to contribute to its evolution:

I've never been given the opportunity to write course materials. I have no idea how to do that. It's something I'd like to do. Having said that, I have been a critical reader on xxx, but that was just a quick message somebody posted on the forum. I don't know how you get the opportunities, because it's not the sort of thing that's advertised; I'm guessing you have to know the right people to be asked. So other than being a critical reader, no I haven't.

(Grace 2)

Anna found it particularly professionally frustrating that she was to all intents and purposes left out of the process of course development, especially at critical points during the course when tutor feedback would have been particularly effective. As part of the life-cycle review of a course the faculty needs to be satisfied that some associate lecturer feedback has been sought and inculcated into the plans for future development of the course. However, the means for collating such information, the ways in which it is incorporated into the report and any subsequent actions are left largely to the discretion of course teams (The Open University, 2010):

I do find it frustrating not to be involved in course writing. I'm getting used to it, just as you get used to any sort of task that you take on, but particularly

having worked with Cambridge University, where they just leave it up to you, how you teach and what you teach from. If you do a lecture course, they say will you lecture on this? Leaving it entirely up to you how you do it. Being used to that, I did find it frustrating, I still do sometimes, especially on one particular course, some of the assumptions behind the course are assumptions I deeply disagree with. Not the way the course is put together, but the idea of the sociolinguistic attitudes. It's to do with the material, so you have to be careful of that when advising students.

(Anna 2)

Recent statements by the new Pro Vice Chancellor were welcomed by some respondents, who saw this as a future possible sea change for the University and the ways in which associate lecturers were perceived. Jasper's dialogue outlines some of the ways in which he feels he is perceived by the OU:

I glanced at the *Snowball* magazine that arrived yesterday and saw that our new VC [Vice Chancellor] is very, very concerned about what he calls the gap and the rift between central academics and ALs. I really just skimmed it, so I must sit down and read it more fully, but he speaks quite strongly about it. I can't remember the phrase he uses, but it's something along the lines of: 'It strikes to the heart of me, that there should be this division between central academics and ALs.' So do some people think it's a problem? Inevitably, I don't know how many of us ALs there are, about ten thousand or so? Personally I've never found it so and whenever I've had email contact with the course team members of the courses that I tutor on, I've never got a sense of that kind of division. But, you only have to look in the AL common room ... so much of it's a kind of winge about this or that. I

suppose that reflects the extent of the divide between central academics and what some people would call us menials.

(Jasper 2)

Although Jasper indicates that he personally has experienced this underlying hegemony that associate lecturers are somehow doing a more menial task than central academics, his use of vocabulary and the impact that the Pro Vice Chancellor's report had on him (being able to recall more or less his exact words), the use of the powerful word 'menial', and his uneasiness about the content of the associate lecturer common room point to a dissatisfaction with the status quo. A dissatisfaction that he may well not have wished to verbalise for fear of destabilising his own feelings of professionalism in an environment in which the dominant hegemonies have determined that the associate lecturer is seen by the institution and ergo the sector as being very much the type of piecemeal worker discussed by in the literature review (Egerton and Halsey, 1992).

Resistance to views on professionalism, whether imposed by the organisation, the sector or the student, is an important part of remaining professionally salient (Reeve, 1992; Baxter, 2004). It is when these defences are eroded by our own sense of becoming less professionally salient that intrinsic motivation is affected: leading to professional dissatisfaction, cynicism and eventual departure from the organisation or, in extreme cases, from the profession (Baxter 2004). It is important for the organisation, the sector and the individual that this development need is recognised and addressed. In terms of the Kotter model of change management (1995), this represents a substantial organisational effort on the perceptual change needed to effect buy-in from a large, powerful and

fundamentally important staff body. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6.

Part of the need for professional recognition emanated from the desire of lecturers to reflect on their teaching practices in light of comments and observations from colleagues, and in some cases line managers. This need for professional recognition keys into two main strands: the need to discuss practice and the need to feel that one's practice is being shared for the good of the student and the profession. The idea of sharing good practice in teaching has been discussed by many researchers over a number of years, but the need for this to be practically implemented in terms of the online environment continues to excise both organisation and sector (Stevenson, 2006; Hanson, 2009; White et al., 2010).

Comments made by participants not only suggest the need to have professional conversations with colleagues, but also indicate the need to have the opportunity to reflect on their professional online pedagogies and to harvest ideas from colleagues at the same stage as them, as well as more experienced colleagues.

As mentioned earlier, in the context of what attracted and retained lecturers in the first six months of their employment, mentoring was viewed as a very positive element. Mark describes what impact his mentor had on his teaching:

I had a really good mentor when I joined the OU that not only helped with my AL work but all of my other work, too. She was really good, she said here's how I do it and I used that at my other university and the feedback was, what a great teacher.

(Mark 1)

Comments about what respondents feel make a great teacher offer insights into the future role of online mentors:

Someone who takes you out of your comfort zone.

(Mark 2)

To model the practical, hands on elements.

(Judy 2)

To encourage your creativity.

(Sam 2)

To model good practice.

(Louise 1)

To save you time!

(Grace 2)

To encourage different ways of looking at things.

(Grace 2)

Anything that adds to my professional learning, anything that will improve the way I do my job and feel about my performance. Be active, moving, challenging, exciting, changing pace, encouraging participation, modelling that.

(Sam 1)

There was evidence to suggest that mentoring was important in the initial stages of working online and that it should continue throughout the duration of the lecturer's career within the organisation. This was reflected in Judy's comments on her engagement with an online course:

I went on it, and I think I might have got something out of it, but then it ended, and so did my learning.

(Judy 2)

In Judy's case the lack of ongoing support and feelings of isolation in terms of discussing what she had learned on the course all but negated the learning itself, in her mind. This is not to say that she didn't learn anything, and perhaps talking with a colleague about changes that she may have made to her practices because of this course may well have not only reinforced her learning but also, and perhaps equally importantly, heightened her perceptions of learning and the concomitant positive impact that this may have made on her professional identity.

Louise felt that there was danger in creating a type of folklore of professional knowledge, passed from person to person via forums and other means, which sees anecdote alone as something that could quash professional reflection. She also pointed to the need for an efficient way to share good online practices, not only within the University, but also across the sector. This keys into one of the core elements of the JISC interim report on e-learning (2010), discussed in Chapter 1:

A lot of what you hear about what teachers do is very anecdotal, it's quite worrying that this often overrides what has been researched and is known to work with students. It's what teachers do when they let their own experiences and anecdotal past override their professional judgement.

(Louise 2)

It is worrying that this type of professional anecdote is seen to be detrimental to professional development rather than contributing to it in the way that staffroom talk allows exploration of problems and issues arising within teaching. But it is, perhaps, indicative of the kind of solipsism engendered by feelings of professional isolation. The feeling that this type of learning needs to be placed in a wider context in order to have value and a key indicator that the professional needs time to reflect in the context of established knowledge and research on the subject of online teaching.

But if online forums and other means of connecting with colleagues online is to be successful, in both combating feelings of isolation and provoking productive discussion, it needs, to a certain extent, to emulate a traditional staffroom in some ways: mixing research and established forms of knowledge, with intuition, intrinsic knowledge and underlying hegemonies about the role, the organisation and the perceptions of line managers, students and administrators. There were indications that although forums possessed potential as fertile areas for the growth of professional knowledge, there were drawbacks that would need to be addressed in order to exploit these potentialities. One such drawback was the physical environment, the interface:

It's not intuitive at all, I engage with colleagues online, but through other programs.

(Mark 2)

Another involved the types of tutors engaged online:

Everyone is just trying to outdo one another, be better than each other.

(Louise 2)

This kind of interaction was clearly off-putting for a new tutor such as Louise. But it does raise the point of why this type of competitive interaction was occurring in the forum. Was it defensiveness based on insecurities around teaching methods? Or a healthy debate about what works best? These questions again highlight the role of language online.

Luke's earlier remarks about the reasons why he did not engage online were more to do with the speed that the dialogue progressed (Luke 1); this was also mirrored by Judy's experiences in an online tutor forum, in which she, too, found that the pace of the dialogue moved at such a rate that she was disinclined to join in. She also found that she became lost in who was saying what and how this, more importantly, related to the fact that she had never encountered any of these people face to face, and therefore had no mnemonic hook upon which to hang her perceptions of them as people:

I couldn't identify the people any more, and it just seemed as if everyone was in competition to be the best.

(Judy 2)

There were strong feelings about the rationale behind fully online teaching, although the origins of these hegemonies were somewhat difficult to determine. There was an overriding sense that all courses were going to be delivered fully online, but this belief appeared to have originated in a number of different ways: through personal research, conferences, folklore and general feelings about the economy and the future of education as a whole. For most of the respondents in this study, their perceptions were an amalgam of all of these, combined with a

feeling that a Pro Vice Chancellor who had previously worked in a senior role at Microsoft was clearly going to implement a fully online policy. A view not supported by the mission statement of the online HEFCE task force, which states that they will 'look at ways of engagement' (White et al., 2010). Perhaps the most dominant feeling, and one expressed by those who declared themselves aficionados of online working, was whether it would be satisfying and comfortable working for both student and teacher; although an increasing body of evidence suggests that students are engaging with fully online courses in very positive ways.

This uncovering of hegemonies, expectations and concerns is vitally important to the future of effective professional learning and any effective course of professional learning will need to address them, in either an implicit or an explicit manner. In the same way as any effective course or strategy aimed at the continual professional development of professionals in any field, these innovations should not be delivered outside of the political, pedagogical and economic context within which individuals will be operating (Feltham and Horton, 2003; Baxter, 2004;).

The issue of moving on professionally or staying put, which, although it may feel unsatisfying, appears to the individual to be a safer option than taking professional risks that may not, in the end, pay off, is highlighted at various points in the narrative. In virtually all cases the remarks of the individuals are qualified by their feelings on the nature of learning in the online environment. In Sam's case, he still separates the subject from online pedagogies, a classic trait of the 'late adopter' alluded to in the literature review (Kotter, 1995), and also seen in the earlier NOF¹⁰

¹⁰ New Opportunities Fund for Teaching and Learning.

initiative to introduce secondary teachers to ways of teaching and learning using information communication technologies:

Part of me thinks that it's quite exciting but another part of me thinks, someone's got to do some research to see how this is panning out in reality, but it's all a bit unknown really.

(Sam 2)

There seemed, too, to be a feeling that because the formal courses offered tended to be generic, this failed, for some, to engage them into thinking deeply how techniques could be applied to their subject areas:

I think because the course I went on was for ALs generally, not ALs doing my course, or even ALs in my faculty, it was too general, too none specific.

(Jenny 2)

The feeling that the environment promotes this sort of unhealthy competition has been voiced now by various participants in the context of online forums (Luke 2, Judy 2 and Mark 1). All felt that there seemed to be a rather aggressively competitive spirit in the forums and that this was detrimental to both contributions and the learning environment. In terms of the hierarchy of online needs (Salmon, 2002), many participants indicated that they do not feel psychologically safe to contribute.

Participants indicated a need to develop with regard to not only their capabilities and skills, but also their enthusiasm to share the pedagogical tips that they had gleaned thus far within the online environment. This wish to share good practice

was articulated in terms of the formal recognition of good practices, as well as the exchange of good practices with colleagues. However, they also expressed the need for the exchange to be done in a more focused way than appears to be in place currently.

Earlier in the chapter, Grace talked about her need for a recognition of the various skills gained during her time as an associate lecturer, and her wish to become more involved and gain experience in other aspects related to teaching and learning within the OU. Sam, Louise, Grace and Anna expressed a need to be involved in course writing and revisions, with Grace articulating how arbitrary the system was for electing which associate lecturers were invited to work on these aspects of the job.

Although none of the respondents explicitly alluded to online peer observation, there were a number of comments that suggested the need for meaningful professional discussion. As discussed earlier, individuals' perceptions tended to indicate that the more generic professional development opportunities permeated the learning experience at a level that did not seem to impact fully on the professional identities, nor evoke feelings of articulated self-salience within the narratives. Some of the comments in which this was inferred are outlined below:

Professional learning for me is something that leads to professional competence and that's continuing professional development which the OU historically did exceedingly well, but I fear that much of that type of CPD, the useful type, just isn't around anymore.

(Jasper 2)

When we went to the CPD day it was very much different faculties and there seemed to be a huge barrier between everybody, not really wanting to get to know you or how you work, just a case of I do this, I'm marvellous at that. I found that very off-putting.

(Rose 2)

Current research on peer observation in teaching within the online environment is relatively recent (Bennett et al., 2008) and builds largely on work done in a face-to-face environment (Gosling, 2005a, 2005b), but the advantages of such innovations, even though research in this area is still in its early stages, are located within the narratives of the lecturers interviewed for this research:

I like the idea of a friendly observer in my session, someone to spark ideas off. It would have to be well thought out, though, someone who wouldn't mind you sitting in on their forum, too.

(James 2)

The role of mentoring also had positive connotations for some of the respondents. James articulates how being in a helping role aided his self-confidence and his own learning, making him feel more competent and professionally useful as a result:

Being a mentor helped me reflect on how I help students. When I was helping the tutor to help students I was reflecting on how I help students, provide summaries and also reflecting on the structure of my tutorials because, obviously, all tutors do it differently; and my mentee was telling me about how she was going to structure tutorials, and I was giving her

advice. Then I reflected on the fact that mine were possibly too structured and, perhaps, I should provide more opportunity for discussion and so on.

(James 2)

The monitoring role was also highlighted as being useful, not only for someone being monitored in their correspondence tuition, but also for those whose role it was to monitor. This raises the issue of whether monitoring should be a peer issue rather than the 'expert', novice exercise that it is at the moment. This does challenge a system that has been a cornerstone of university practices for some time. Jasper voices the opinion that, for him, being a monitor¹¹ was a steep learning curve and one which yielded substantial benefits for his own teaching:

Being a monitor has also been a learning experience for me. To understand the variety of interpretations that can exist among my fellow tutors. I've also found as a marker that it's very easy to think that one's own interpretation is clear and that everybody else will interpret something in the same way. But when you are there, working with other tutors and markers, you realise that not everyone interprets everything in the way that you do, and sometimes you have to put your facts and arguments together to justify why you believe what you think; that's interesting.

(Jasper 2)

¹¹ Someone who comments on another's correspondence tuition – this happens via a sample from each presentation of a module.

The three elements have a communality between them, being a marker (of exams or end-of-course assessments), being a mentor and being a monitor all present opportunities for tutors to engage with each other on a professional level. Each activity has specific, measurable, achievable and time-limited objectives; each provides a professional focus for tutors to engage formally with one another. Although there were thought to be some distinct operational drawbacks to the procedures, by and large the potentialities of the activities in terms of their potential to develop professional identities were considerable. This indicates that the activities may benefit from being examined and restructured to take into account how they may impact on future professional online identities. Forums that are structured around these activities, Elluminate® sessions that have the activities as a focus, or face-to-face development days which bring together and share good practices in a structured way, may well be avenues to explore in the future.

Conclusion

The data has revealed a number of key insights that respond to the original research questions uncovering areas in which professional learning needs were highlighted. The narratives indicated the key role of the development of professional online identity and pointed up elements of difficulty in developing and sustaining such an identity within the context of their teaching. They also indicated that this was an area in which individuals were professionally stuck: that they needed more areas to explore online interactions and the psychological and linguistic elements that this would engender. Worryingly, there were strong feelings that online teaching was creating or would create ethical dilemmas in terms of whether this form of teaching is really driven by the needs of the student

or purely driven by economic expedience. Although at times there were indications that the two may not always be viewed as mutually exclusive, this was not the prevailing feeling in the overall analysis of the data.

Personal and professional motivation featured greatly within the dialogues. There were indications that although respondents felt that they were making progress in their online teaching, this progress was not happening as quickly as they would like. Those with many years of experience in face-to-face teaching found this to be a particularly frustrating and retrogressive professional move. There was an innate expectation that they *should* be able to teach online: that it should somehow follow on from their blended and face-to-face practices. It is, perhaps, this unrealistic expectation that is most impeding their progress and impacting negatively on their motivation.

Feelings of isolation, not only physical but professional isolation, also permeated the dialogue. These were mediated by thoughtful insights on what could be done to overcome this, some pointing to practical improvement of the medium in order to create a better environment within which to teach, some pointing to the need for much greater opportunities to discuss professional practices and articulate concerns without having to worry about seeming unprofessional or incompetent. A need to redress the status quo was also indicated within the discussions, reflecting feelings that, for some time now, the role had been reduced not only in scope and nature but also in terms of status and centrality. An urgent need for the organisation to redress this perceptual imbalance was indicated at both macro and micro level; not only in terms of the big picture, but also at a more practical level.

The discussion, while revealing areas for new professional learning and potentialities for development and interpretation of existing tried and tested methods, also pointed to the ways in which online teaching was evolving. Most importantly for this study, it highlighted the fact that an important stage has been reached in the evolution of online teaching and learning: a stage which has the potential to maximise existing pedagogies while exploring new ways to exploit the medium and developing new ways in which to make professional identities an integral and central part of the online learning experience.

How this information relates to the framework for professional learning and what this means for the individual, the institution and the sector is discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This Chapter discusses the ways in which the findings relate to the literature and examines the contribution of this study to new knowledge.

The framework for professional identity proved effective not only for the identification of identities, but also in its capacity to reveal which key elements were affecting their formation and the ways in which they evolve. The study revealed the primacy of the role of community in the formation of these identities and the extent to which different communities possess different capacities to form and shape them, reflecting the importance of the constructivist view of identity formation (Bruner, 1997). The research highlighted the perceptual impact of communities of practice and revealed the extent to which the individual felt included or excluded in these communities affected their motivation and feelings of self-salience (Wenger 1998). In this study there were a number of indications that lecturers felt excluded from university faculty communities due to both the lack of opportunity to engage with them online and the isolation engendered by both their physical isolation from the university and very often their inability to create online professional relationships. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Henkel (2000, p. 158) and Hanson (2009) assert that the key drivers of academic identity are: the institution, the discipline (subject) and a sense of the profession. However, although these elements appeared in this study not all of the key drivers were reflected equally in terms of the extent to which they influenced the identities of these part-time distance tutors. Their sense of profession not only depended upon whether their principal form of income came from online teaching but varied according the ways in which they perceived online teaching: whether they

perceived it to be a distinct professional activity with a distinct professional skill set or an 'add on' to face to face teaching. For some although their previous identities in blended and face to face environments had been strong there were feelings that this level of salience ought to have been quickly transferrable to online teaching. When this failed to take place there appeared to be a sense of disappointment and an erosion of previously robust professional identities, reflected in some of the powerful metaphors used to describe these feelings. In addition although teaching online appeared to make some feel de-skilled, the data revealed very little evidence of discussions as to what may constitute an outstanding online lecturer. This differed greatly from the literature pertaining to face to face teaching identity development in which modelling on teachers viewed as outstanding constituted a key element to teaching identity formation (Banks et al, 1999).

As the literature review reflected, the discipline did prove important to the ways in which the lecturers saw themselves: in instances in which their sense of the discipline was strong, this was a key driver in the formation and shape of their professional identities (Henkel, 2000: Hanson, 2009). But this sense of the discipline could also prove detrimental to their motivation to teach online when concern as to whether the online approach to their subject was pedagogically sound. This seemed to link to certain subject areas rather than others although because of the small sample in this study it was difficult to ascertain whether this was significant.

As articulated within the feminist and later Foucaultian conceptual underpinning, there was a great degree of agency that emerged from the responses (Foucault, 1980). Individuals clearly expressed a sense of the ways in which their own teaching identities were adapting to inculcate certain elements of online interaction

while rejecting other aspects. Increasing evidence of agency and motivation in this study represents a key departure from earlier literature which indicated that technological determinism prevented teachers from being creative online (Turkle, 1993). The interviews also indicated a growing awareness that in order to develop in their online roles lecturers would need to look beyond the confines of both institution and profession to gain a sense of what constitutes effective online interaction.

But the struggle for agency uncovered several areas in which tensions were still occurring: areas in which professional learning interventions were required. As discussed earlier, the first of these appeared in the form of a lack of conviction on whether fully online learning was an ethically sound and effective way of teaching students. This was particularly evident in the ways in which individuals questioned whether all aspects of the curriculum could be effectively be delivered by online teaching or whether this form of teaching was depriving students of some of the more life changing elements inherent within education (Armitage et al., 1999). Concerns and needs for professional development in this area were particularly evident in discussions on the ways in which the OU's summer school experience may or may not be replicated online. In this context, concern focused less on the content of the course and more on the ways in which lecturers could facilitate productive social relationships between students. Those individuals who were experimenting with social networking sites outside of the academic domain were more positive about this. Their confidence was enhanced by online interactions with friends and family in which they were able to experiment with their online personas. They were overcoming the types of textual shame articulated by Crystal (2006) and going some way to exploring the textual language with which to capture the online world. Their experiences and insights emerged as particularly

valuable in terms of the type of professional learning opportunities that could be cascaded in the context of mentoring programmes or professional learning opportunities offered by the University. This suggested that online lecturer social events may also be of benefit in the professional context. However the data revealed that this type of activity would be more likely to engage individuals had there been some form of face to face interaction first.

The Framework for Professional Learning was successful in uncovering some beliefs that were colouring individuals' approach to online teaching. The most prevalent of these was the belief that the University is committed to placing all of its courses online and that, to a great degree, this decision had been taken out of economic expedience rather than basing it on any pedagogic rationale. This element seemed to be causing some issues with lecturers in terms of the ways in which they perceived the University's mission. The reasons that they gave for joining the OU were particularly valuable in this context as they offered insights into the extent to which individuals sought out this type of employment due to a strong belief in the core mission of the university and their role in delivering this. In cases in which they felt agency in effecting this mission they were much more likely to embrace online technologies and invest more of their personal time and energy in improving their online teaching. This indicated a developing sense of online teaching as a distinct profession rather than an add-on to face to face modes. In terms of Kotter's change management model (1995), this indicates lack of effective input from either institution or sector bodies on the ways in which online pedagogies can effectively deliver learning across a range of subjects. This failure to fully explore the benefits of online learning to students appeared to have a negative effect on the agency of the individuals to fully embrace online identities. In instances in which lecturers had *successfully* and *enjoyably* taken part in online

learning experiences their underlying beliefs in the potential of the online environment were much stronger and their sense of agency more robust, implying a need for more work in this area (Macdonald, 2001). In terms of the framework for professional learning it revealed a need for development in stages 4 and 5: 'managing emotions online' and 'dealing with feelings of resistance' (see Figure 5.1 below), opening a dialogue in which lecturers could participate in a constructive debate about how the university could continue this mission. The study also revealed that within this particular sample lecturers had not specifically joined the University in order to work fully online. This may indicate a need for future recruitment to place an emphasis on employing those with the specific attributes necessary to be able to teach online, whilst recognising that these may not be the same as those desirable in face to face teaching.

Following on from this the research revealed the importance of early professional development for online lecturers (Banks and Shelton Mayes, 2001). The data indicated that although professional development was available this needed to take place in a far more focused way. The modelling aspects of learning featured within this, point to the need for lecturers to be able to emulate the skilled online lecturers in the ways in which they pedagogically portray their online personas. This went some way to supporting the peer support work done by Gosling (2005a) as well as indicating the need for following up early innovations such as the online moderator course mentioned earlier devised by Macdonald and colleagues (Macdonald, 2001.) The responses also indicated that this was also necessary in order to work with lecturer expectations of the role, particularly in instances when these differed from operational realities.

A particularly strong theme in the findings was the need to be able to find some manner of embodiment in the online world. This did not necessarily have to be the full-blown avatar mentioned in the literature review (Sheehy et al., 2009), but may just represent the type of presence offered by systems such as Skype ®. This type of representation was considered to be far more effective than a purely textual one. Both in this context and as a theme running through the interviews, a need to consider ways in which professional learning outside of the University could be brought to bear in teaching situations prevailed. So too the need to acknowledge that boundaries between the types of learning considered to be purely social compared to that which individuals considered to be for purely professional purposes were being broken down and influenced by student and tutor online interaction outside of the University. This supported the feminist view of identity formation in the sense of it being agentive: a tool to be, ‘Shaped and formed in order to fulfil needs and exigencies of a particular situation or role.’ (Gilligan, 1982, p. 122).

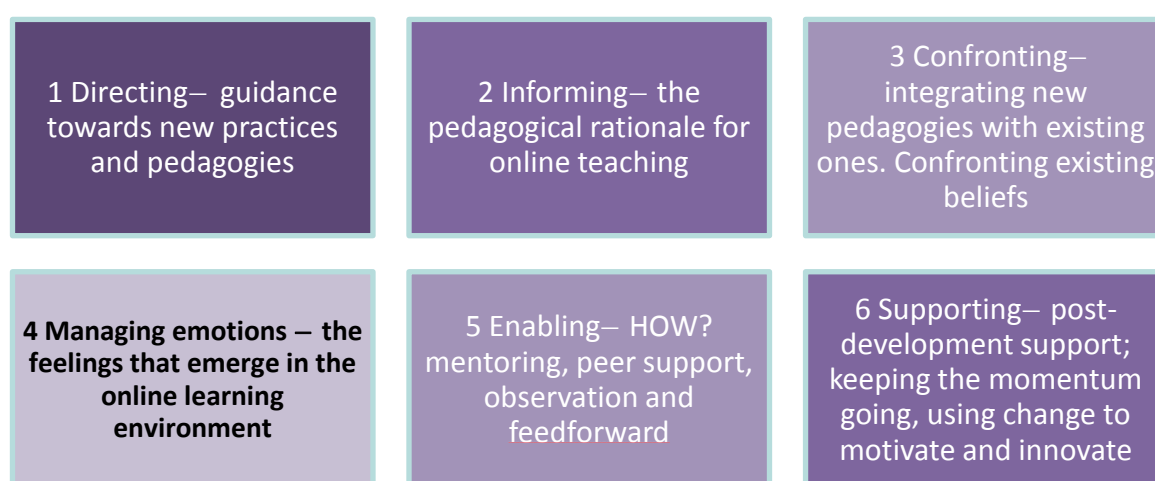


Figure 5.1 Framework for professional learning (Source: adapted from Heron, 1999)

The study also concluded that there were a number of issues not being effectively addressed with regard to stage 3 (the 'confronting' stage) of the framework for professional learning (see Figure 5.1). The feeling of being stuck, of not being able or in some cases willing to experiment in the online environment was also prevalent within the narratives. The sense of fear and risk, of knowing less than the student, feeling that professionalism may be compromised by lack of ability to manipulate tools engendered strongly defensive attitudes that in some cases professionally undermined individuals, creating a negative impact upon both their self-esteem and a confident articulation of an online teaching identity.

Although several professional development initiatives had attempted to address this 'confronting' stage, it seemed that, by and large the approaches used were still informative rather than transformative. As a result when lecturers reached stage 4 of the model and experienced strong emotions, such as the individual who had been on a moderator course but felt that everyone knew more than them, or the lecturer who had issues with online feedback (which had not been addressed in the context of their work), they appeared to be professionally 'stuck' and unable to move beyond their present skill levels. This echoed the stages of early teacher development in the literature review (Alsup, 2006), and again pointed up the need for effective induction training and mentoring (Butcher 2001).

The problems experienced at the confronting stage of the model highlight a need for more opportunities to analyse professional practices through a system of either peer development or mentoring. Large multidisciplinary staff development events do not appear in this study to have the capacity to create long-lasting collegial relationships that have the potential to be both supportive and challenging in the professional context. This need for a peer support network goes beyond the idea

of tutor forums, which some find supportive but others do not. There is a need for a network which goes some way to overcoming the 'us and them' hegemony which seems to prevail among lecturers who participate in a myriad of University activities and those who do not and who clearly feel very much on the 'outer circles' of the community.

The idea of community discussed earlier, appeared throughout the narratives alongside the ways in which lecturers felt excluded and 'peripheral' (Wenger 1998). The subject community clearly emerged as a major component within the identities of the individuals. But interestingly there seemed to be a need for the institution to make subject communities more vibrant within the organisation, to draw further upon this very strong facet of academic identity and through this medium, to work on those elements of the identity which need to be strengthened and supported. In a campus based institution this may be taken as read, but in in this particular environment to date it has largely been the responsibility of the part-time lecturers to engage with their particular subject community via their own networks, rather than specific engagement via the university. Given recent news that the subject centres of the HEA may well be closed down, it would seem that the institution may well need to invest more resource into the provision of online subject communities in order to ensure that their part-time staff may profit from advantages that this form of collegiality brings to the development and sustenance of teaching identities. The research also supported the view that a one-to-one peer/buddy support system would allow those from the same subject area to buddy up and support each other's teaching (Gosling, 2005a; Bennett and Lee , 2010). This would also have the advantage of providing a subject-centred knowledge base within the University: a place where lecturers teaching at all levels could interact either on a one-to-one basis or as part of a subject group.

In the literature review (Chapter 2) the section on the changing nature of teaching identities discussed the view that individuals are unsure about the ways in which to articulate their online identities (Chrystal, 2006; Giles et al., 1991). The study revealed this concern to be increasingly prevalent with the advent of social networking and highlighted the need for individuals to convey a salient online identity which has the breadth to be able to encompass and manifest the different elements of the personality used within a face-to-face situation, in order to create and achieve a working relationship with their students. These elements include the following: use of humour, linguistic register, how to achieve tone and use paralinguistic clues within online textual interchange, and how to continue to retain the authority demanded by the role, yet still retain the 'human' face of the learning experience. A particularly interesting insight within the study was the fact that participants were sensitised to the way in which they appeared online confirming Chrystal's assertion that the language and expression online is still at a formative stage (Chrystal, 2006). Unlike the face-to-face situation in which interlocutors are immersed in the immediacy of the moment an online 'mirror effect' permits lecturers to see themselves as others see them, via the dialogues and the transcripts that emerge from online communication tools. Although this was negatively perceived by some respondents, the rather painful element of this phenomenon may represent the 'incunabulum' of successful online persona articulation. In other words, through a heightened awareness of the emergence of online personas, individuals may develop the ability to more successfully manipulate their textual representations in order to enhance teaching and learning. This also extended to the management of online discussion forums and group work in which successful articulation of an online teaching persona may pre-empt or aid the ways in which lecturers effectively tackle online flaming and one-

upmanship, as described by Joinson and colleagues in the literature review (Joinson et al., 2007). These are factors that need to be taken into account for all types of student, but in light of the University's increasing engagement with younger students may well prove increasingly pressing. The narratives have demonstrated that unresolved worry on how to effectively manage the tricky social situations that arise online, such as too much disclosure on the part of the student, inappropriate register (for example using text chat-type posts such as 'c u tomoro'), and flaming, can lead to lecturers questioning the effectiveness of the teaching experience and have an inimical effect on how it feels to teach online, while also raising fears of whether this form of teaching gives the student an enjoyable and worthwhile learning experience.. This supports the importance of Bauman's view of online representation as the crafting of a personal narrative (Bauman, 2007) and the need for both student and lecturer to be confident in this area.

An additional insight that emerged in terms of the research interviews was that respondents viewed the interviews themselves as an opportunity to narrativise their experience and talk through not only the challenges of teaching online, but also the ways in which they felt they had developed. Some participants commented that looking back on the transcript of their initial interview just before taking part in the follow-up interview six months later showed them just how far they had come. These comments raise question of whether the opportunity to narrativise their new identities is the key to a swifter engagement with the online environment. Does the act of describing who they are online make them feel more salient within their professional role? This research would appear to indicate that it does. If this is so, then opportunities to do this via professional dialogue (Stevenson, 2006) need to be regular enough to be effective in coaching the

identities through difficult times while remaining flexible enough for the exercise to be perceived as worthwhile, satisfying and professionally motivating.

Other ways in which the role of feedback was highlighted included fairly negative views of the extent to which the online feedback system was useful. Gaining meaningful feedback from students in an online environment (the type of feedback that engenders professional reflection and which ultimately, results in changes to practice) is an element which has been neglected during the transitional period between working in a blended environment and fully working online. The university's feedback instrument tends to be thought of as a quality control mechanism rather than a useful tool for professional development. An increased emphasis on feedback as a teaching tool would be useful in a fully online context. In addition, while the system of monitoring (being constructively criticised on feedback and marking techniques) is clearly very useful, it is also evident that in some cases part-time lecturers would benefit from greater involvement and knowledge about all of the processes that go into making a good student experience, rather than confining their practices to what takes place within their particular module. Comments supporting the notion that the University has encouraged lecturers to think only in terms of the module that they are engaged to teach have a number of implications for both lecturers and students: the modular mode of thinking effectively curtails one of the fundamental notions of the professional teaching role, that is, the natural interest of the teacher in the student's future progression. Viewing the student as the recipient of teaching within the context of a single module also curtails a vital element of professional development: the contextualisation of one's own teaching situation as part of a 'bigger picture'. This contextualisation is important, encouraging lecturers to participate in their wider community of subject knowledge, their subject home in

terms of both the university and professional bodies. It has positive potential both from the point of view of the lecturer's own development, and also in terms of the teacher's ability to inculcate the idea of progression towards a qualification in the student psyche. It is a feature of this particular university that due to past funding arrangements many students register with the initial intention of only completing a single module and tutors have, in the past been encouraged to think in terms that confine them to the single module on which they teach. This study has revealed this isolation from both other elements of the subject and between levels within a subject to be detrimental to the development of online teaching identities.

The study revealed that professional learning is not confined to the development opportunities within the institution, and that identities draw upon a multidimensional approach to learning. In the context of some narratives insights emerged which pointed to the need for development to draw upon different and more lateral thinking notions of expertise, for example the lecturer who has successfully created identities in other arenas, or the fiction writer who uses text to create characters.

Comments about staff development lacking an inspirational element are of some concern. If development events fail in themselves to include the three elements of the curriculum – the advertised, the informal and the hidden – then they are missing out on important opportunities to involve and motivate lecturing staff (Armitage et al, 1999). The narratives indicated that many of these events were indeed one-dimensional, their fundamental design containing learning outcomes that did not include contextualisation of approach, at both a subject and an institutional level. If lecturers are expected to develop a syncretism of their own style, this study revealed that they require forms of development which take an

affective view of online teaching, as well as taking into account cognitive and situative factors. If professional learning fails to address these elements, there are indications within this research that development opportunities will fail to have a positive impact on professional identities.

Although these findings are based upon part-time lecturers, the insights gained are also applicable to the great number of full-time and campus-based staff currently making sense of online working. In the future they may also be useful to those within other sectors, such as secondary education, which increasingly look to online offerings in order to combat the effects of rising class sizes and budget cuts. The discussion within Chapter 6 examines what the study may conclude from these findings and outlines implications for both staff and institution.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first looks at the effectiveness of the framework for identity analysis (Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1): the extent to which it was effective in establishing both the existence of professional identities and the degree to which they are in flux. The second section analyses the results of the research questions and the conclusions arising from them. The final section looks at research question 5, analysing the information gleaned within this study and discussing ways in which it can be used by both institution and sector.

Reflections on the research processes within the study

I found that when carrying out this research I encountered a number of different positions with regard to the work. Academic colleagues were supportive, suggesting that it was timely and had the potential to yield insights for both the organisation and the individual. However, this view was not shared by all. Some managerial colleagues felt the work to be provocative, and thought that my own position within the organisation would be compromised by it. One colleague commented:

Oh well, you clearly don't want to rise up the ranks if you are doing this sort of work, particularly at such a difficult financial time for the University; with strikes looming and possibility of redundancies on the horizon, you'll just be seen as a stirrer.

Another commented:

You're just giving them a chance to complain, when they should just knuckle down to it; we all have to be flexible in this environment, if they are having a problem with that, then they aren't up to the job.

The role, contrast and function of institutional research versus that done within the context of a professional doctorate caused some tensions within my position as an educational development coordinator. As an insider I had knowledge that a number of staff development initiatives pioneered by the organisation had been written up with a particular agenda in mind: to prove the efficacy of such programmes using positive feedback and to encourage others to take part in such programmes. In some cases, these development programmes were compulsory in order to undertake certain duties, therefore the subsequent evaluations tended to look on the positive side. This can almost certainly be attributed to the organisational impetus to fund and provide development which can be justified economically by its positive impact. So far there is little evidence which links these programmes of institutional development to results and student outcomes. In addition, there are no systems in place at the present time which link colleagues who have been on these courses to pass rates within their particular student groups. My own research revealed a number of comments on these institutionally provided programmes: some positive, some constructively critical and some negative. This in itself caused some concern in terms of my relationship with regional and national academic developers who may have perceived the comments as being what Sikes and Potts (2008, p. 24) term 'uncollegial'.

However, evidence suggests that this is not uncommon with regard to insider researchers studying for a professional doctorate and the findings that result from their research, and many have left their organisations shortly after completing it,

feeling their revised positions within the organisation to be untenable in light of their findings (Sikes and Potts, 2008). This feeling of dissonance has been proposed as one of the reasons why a relatively high proportion of candidates fail to complete professional doctoral studies. As for my own research, and consequently this study, I have yet to fully resolve my feelings in terms of these elements. Nevertheless, I hope that my research findings will be looked at in the spirit in which they are intended: as a constructively critical view of what is currently perceived as effective professional learning, by practitioners, and a view of how future learning can take these findings and translate them into enhanced professional learning programmes and opportunities.

It is generally accepted within the field of identity research that there is a need for all identity development researchers to examine the utility of their theory (Erikson, 1968, 1975; Gilligan, 1982; Rose, 1982; McAdams et al., 2006). Deciding on a theory for identity investigation was challenging and involved a good deal of personal work on my part, as my reading also provoked me to reflect on the facets making up my own professional and personal identities and how they changed and evolved throughout the course of the study. It involved analysing the ethical, psychological, philosophical, linguistic and social aspects of identity and the ways that these interrelate to produce an understanding of this elusive and much-researched entity. While I felt that the initial conceptual underpinning did indeed elucidate the various aspects of identity, I also felt that nuances of my understanding evolved as the study progressed (and still continue to do so). By the time I did the second interviews my understanding of how personal and cultural philosophies colour approaches was more profound than during the first round of discussions. Had I the time to do a third round of interviews, I would certainly have analysed the data within the context of my evolving understandings.

For this research I felt that the framework for identity analysis proved to be a powerful organising tool: it reflected my understandings of how identities are researched while also providing a robust feminist approach for conducting the research and presenting the data. I found that it also provided a clear underpinning for analysis of the different elements that comprise identity, raising my consciousness and heightening my awareness of the facets as they emanated both during the interviews and later during the transcript analysis phase.

Choosing this approach combined with the fact that it relies so heavily on my own ability to be reflexive has been both challenging and cathartic. Challenging, from the point of view that rather than negating the transference and projection I have experienced, I have tried to integrate it into my approach. Cathartic, from the point of view that the narrativisation of my own life and experiences, both professional and personal, since beginning this doctorate has informed the way in which I approach both research and teaching. And at the same time it has also aided my understanding of the facets of the researcher/participant relationship that played out during the course of the research. This is explored in greater depth in the blog excerpts below (see Appendix 1).

Using the framework for identity analysis combined with the framework for professional learning was useful in that it permitted a deep analysis of what constitutes professional development. During the course of the study, my reading on transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Heron, 1999) provided insights into how individuals perceive their own learning and how this contributes to their identities and ways in which they make sense of their professional roles and the wider world. It also aided my understanding of the areas for development

necessary for the formation and sustenance of a salient online professional teaching identity. A fuller account of my self-reflection is included in Appendix 1.

Lessons for the institution: next steps

The research findings and discussion in chapters 4 and 5 point to a need for the following:

- (a) A subject-specific website that offers social networking opportunities, repositories of teaching materials, and regular tweets from programme managers and central academics which address developments in the academic area while also highlighting developing areas of strategic importance for the institution. The website should also formally advertise opportunities to engage in course writing, examining, marking, research and moderation.
- (b) A practical strategy for peer observation and peer buddying. This could be built into the subject area websites and be offered on a collegial basis.
- (c) Staff development events which hone in on all three areas of the curriculum and address situative, cognitive and affective elements of online teaching.
- (d) Guidance on the textual articulation of online identity. This could be offered by fiction writers used to creating online characters and articulating them in a written context.
- (e) Contextualisation of internal developments and congruence with external innovations.

In terms of operationalising the suggestions above, the study returns once again to the Kotter model of change featured within the literature review and illustrated in Figure 6.1 below. This is used to evaluate the extent to which the institution is successfully implementing its change management programme.

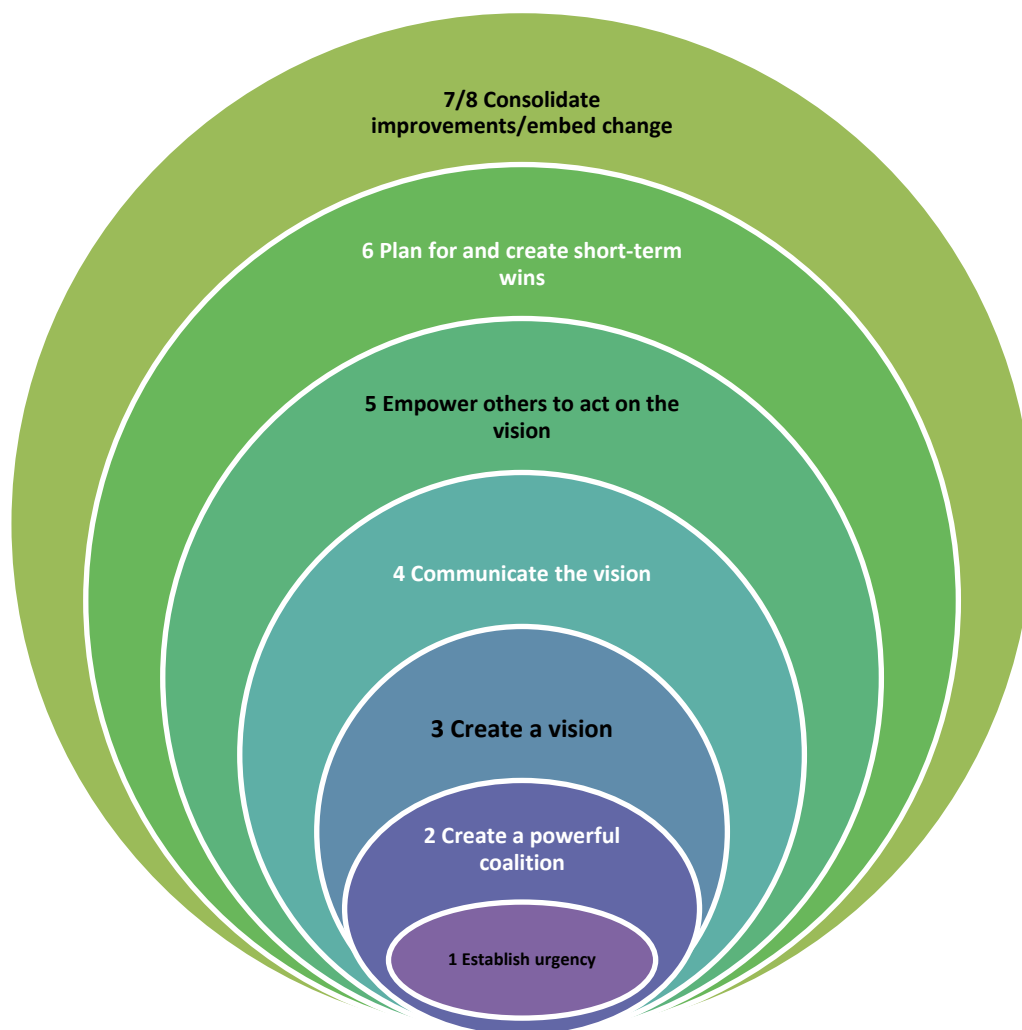


Figure 6.1 Framework for change management (Source: adapted from Kotter, 1995)

Kotter's eight-stage model for organisational change management is applicable not only to The Open University but also, as indicated in the introductory chapter of this study, to the wider sector. In terms of professional learning, the eight stages reflected within this study are as follows.

1 Establish a sense of urgency (stage 1)

As the findings in Chapter 4 reflect, lecturers are aware of the need to adapt their teaching to the online environment but are still not fully convinced that the approach is ethically sound: aligning with their professional identities. Although the sense of urgency seems to have been conveyed, not only by the institution, but equally by the external social, political and economic climate, concerns about pedagogies being offered to students were, in some cases, preventing lecturers from fully engaging. This was also having a detrimental impact on motivation: in some cases the feeling of having to engage so rapidly with the technologies was causing some individuals to feel as if they were being left behind, that the institution had moved on faster than they had. This dichotomy between individual and organisational goals needs to be addressed if the institution wishes to inspire loyalty and a sense that everyone is fighting on the same side.

2 Create a powerful coalition (stage 2)

As discussed in the previous paragraph, in order for this to be achieved, part-time lecturers need not only to be aware of organisational strategic objectives but also to feel as if they are working with the organisation in order to achieve the best for their students. The study pointed up feelings of separation and isolation from both the organisation, articulated very powerfully via the 'locked doors' metaphor, and from other tutors. This appeared to be caused by two main factors. The first, feelings of insecurity about personal ability to pedagogically manipulate the online environment, leading to some inhibitions about sharing practices for fear of being discovered to be less able than peers; the second, feelings of physical isolation from peers within the institution. Establishing an online identity and the difficulties

surrounding this appeared to be instrumental in creating a lack of confidence in terms of online interactions.

3 Create a vision (stage 3), communicate the vision (stage 4), empower others to act on the vision (stage 5), and plan for and create short-term wins (stage 6)

Although this study is about lecturer identity, it is also interesting to consider the institutional identity in light of this section. While e-learning has been championed as the way forward, this study revealed that individuals perceive the organisation and, to a certain extent, the whole notion of higher education and its role to be in the midst of an identity crisis. The study revealed a perceptual grey area between what people thought of as the organisation's original mission and purpose, compared to its present and future function and purpose. The vision of e-learning, particularly when viewed through the lens of day-to-day operational requirements (stage 5), was impeded by the lack of a sense of community among lecturers. The articulation of the vision, slowed down by the poor communication systems and reduction in collegiality between peers. A more effective use of a wider range of enthusiastic protagonists of e-learning, at associate lecturer level, may provide a more robust articulation of the operational aspects of articulating the vision. This also feeds into stage 6 of the model: plan for and create short-term wins. Within this study, lecturers provided some profound insights for the future of online teaching; the challenge for institution and sector will be to use these insights to inform future plans.

4 Consolidate improvements and embed change (stages 7/8)

The final two stages within the model look to embedding change within the culture of the organisation. Again this returns to stages 3, 4 and 5; the organisation has a brand but does it currently have an identity? In order to embed change, the individuals within the organisation need to buy into the vision: a vision that fits with their professional position on what it means for student learning to teach in a fully online context. The University's strength so far has been founded on the unerring loyalty of its 7500 part-time lecturers, in order for it to move with the times the vision needs to be bottom-up as well as top-down.

The study has revealed key areas for change within the context of both new and existing professional knowledge. It has highlighted the need for a lateral thinking approach to professional learning, one that engenders and engages the key factors that have emerged during this study as having most impact on the formation of a salient professional identity. In a postmodern world in which the internet has introduced a multidimensionality to individual's lives and working environment, this needs to be harnessed and used to promote continuing innovation in the realm of professional learning. Analysing and describing professional learning in terms of either skills or capabilities, or expecting lecturers to become mere 'deliverers' of learning reduces the ability of the professional to create a salient online identity: one which merges and homogenises with the other areas within their lives.

In order for the identities not to struggle in opposition to one another, in order for them to merge and blend, the teaching identity must develop a resilience that will not be eroded by extrinsic or intrinsic pressures: a professional identity for the

twenty-first century that will define its own boundaries, its own philosophy, its own hermeneutic in a changing and inchoate online learning environment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Excerpts from blog

June 22 2010

Second interview with xx today. Looking back over the notes of the first, he changed a good deal within the narrative when it was sent back to him for revisions and additions (if necessary). Some of the more contentious comments had been removed, while some additional insights had been added in; sometimes in areas that we hadn't addressed within the context of the telephone call. I feel that I'm still having a conversation with him, an extended conversation that's lasted for the last 6 months. My initial thoughts on this method of research were, 2 interviews, 6 months apart, but that's not the way it's worked out for some people. For some of them, like xx for example, it has been a 2 way dialogue and the first

interview transcript has certainly provoked a degree of reflexivity in some of the participants. For xx it seems to have provoked lots of thinking about when he did his professional doctorate at the OU, and there was a fair amount of conversation about the impact this had on his work and his relationship with colleagues.

This is interesting stuff, particularly in light of the insights given in the Sikes and Potts book on doing insider research (2008). Insider; even the word has connotations; an insider as opposed to an outsider. But the University's so big that you can effectively be both. For me, insider versus outsider has very strong connotations of role at the OU, particularly the divide between that of the academic, the central academic and the manager. For me, the divisions have never seemed more prevalent than within the faculty situation. I find it increasingly difficult to negotiate my position between the 2. I feel divided loyalties in terms of my own identity and its making me feel very uncomfortable. Surely the insights gained by the research should be contributing to my role; bringing together University procedures and QA with the insights gained by the research into the lived realities. But too often these days, it seems that the two, for some, are uncomfortable bedfellows and don't sit easily with either camp. Some of my managerial colleagues have commented quite negatively on the research, thinking it risky to engage in this type of research within the establishment where you work; particularly given the present climate of change, insecurity and a prevalent sense of the unknown.

June 30 2010

I've had to think quite deeply about what is coming out of this research. Been working on my paper for Strathclyde. I only have 3k words to condense all of this

work into something that makes for a good read and is, at the same time, coherent enough to provide the insights, without overly complicating the issues. I think of the Chopin quote: 'Simplicity is the final outcome, after a vast variety of notes have been played ...'. That sums it up really. Some quotes don't come to life as much as they did in the actual situation, you lose the nuance, the wry intonations, some spring to life in a very clear way ... some people have more experience in being interviewed than others, and know exactly how to phrase a quote to achieve maximum impact. Perhaps one of the interviews that provided most insight was, on paper, the least provocative.

When I interviewed the lady, someone who just teaches one course with the OU and teaches full-time in the state sector, perhaps gave some of the most poignant insights, and provided, for me, a real view into how distant she felt from the University. How despite her enthusiasm for 'doing a good job', she never felt she was progressing or even doing a reasonable job. Although her approach was student-centred, she seemed almost to be 'drowning' in the institution; to have lost her sense of self and feelings of efficacy. I got the sense of a relentless machine, driving on regardless of the 'still small voice' of the individual ... depressing. She admitted that she'd be giving up at the end of the presentation; not because of the students, but rather because she didn't fulfil the, what she felt was being expected of her at the Uni. What was being expected? What was there that she felt unable to do? She didn't know; just had a sense that she wasn't doing what was expected ... a powerful yet impossible to articulate hegemony. Or was it? What it actually came down to was the fact that no one ever observed her, gave her feedback, had a friendly chat so that she could compare notes and moans! She felt absolutely peripherally illegitimate ... if that's the opposite of peripheral legitimacy in the words of Wenger.

Where did I stand with regard to her? This was one of the few interviews that took place at the respondent's home. In the kitchen, as it happened. She asked me far more questions about myself, my role at the University, and why I wanted to do this doctorate. In particular, she asked me what I would do when I got it. Although at first there was perhaps the most resistance within this interview, in many senses it seemed to be the most candid. She relaxed a good deal when we established some common ground in terms of teaching; what I had done in the past and what I was doing now, and when she had a chance to talk about her main job; this was clearly where she gained a good deal of her professional identity. Perhaps because of this, she was very candid about what she perceived to be her shortcomings as an OU teacher. She didn't seem to blame the University for this; she just felt that she was totally unprepared for teaching adults, as opposed to children. I asked her if there were not communalities that she drew from one job to another, but she didn't admit to being able to identify any. This was thought provoking, and made me think that if she didn't perceive there to be any transferable skills between primary teaching (and managing as she was a HOD), then surely she would find it difficult to see connections between blended learning and teaching fully online.

July 13 2010

The paper was well received at the conference; there were around 25 at the session and the time flew by. Lots of questions about what I felt the future should be for professional development. That felt strange ... at one point, I almost said crikey, why ask me! Then I realised, well I have researched this thing for the last 4 years ... A very difficult situation arose though ... a person that I'd interviewed

stood up and gave a presentation, based on our interview!! I was a bit shocked, I had never met him in person but had an idea of what he looked like from his photo; but he hadn't seen a photo of me and didn't recognise the name. It was interesting to hear where his thinking was taking him, next. He attended my talk and did contribute some comments. But actually the conference for me was key in many other ways ... I felt very much a part of the academic community and it was great being able to talk about the research with people who were interested in that specific field. I had some very interesting questions from some, one person in particular asking me whether I would term ALs 'academics'. That was a difficult one. Many ALs would never term themselves to be academics, but they are all teaching in HE, which would make them academics were they teaching in any other UK university. I explained to him that I'd thought carefully about use of the term and decided to use it. That then sparked some debate about what an academic is in today's world, and whether you could call teachers in the secondary sector, academics ... food for thought. I discussed too, that some of the ALs I had spoken to in the pilot project had balked at the thought of being termed academics, their primary identities came from their role as e.g. clinical psychologist, business manager etc., the word, academic for them had connotations of being divorced from the operational world in which they achieved, for the most part, their kudos and feelings of self-worth.

29 July 2010

The research is coming to an end and the data analysis, almost complete. I think in light of the research methodology and in terms of the feminist emphasis for the study, I need to look back on what impact the research has had on me and my position as a feminist.

Reading the book, *The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy* (Farnham, 1987), highlighted the need to reflect on the research in light of my own journey and the impact that this work has had on my practices and life. I think that to start with, I certainly didn't have a clue how to articulate the facets of my own identity; this study has brought a keen awareness of what underpins my own identities; what is key and what not. Although I had a vague notion of what made me tick, actually being able to think about the influences at play within the facets of my own identity was a key issue for me when coming to think about the professional identity of others.

March 5 2011

[I include this as an example of the blog because this post, importantly, picks up on the theme mentioned above.] Since I effectively finished the first draft of the thesis, this element of feminist identity and the extent to which it makes up my own identity has become increasingly important to me. Not least, because it has made me examine my own hegemonies; whether they are still valid, or whether during the course of the last 3 years I have rejected some and acquired others. Perhaps more importantly; which have I rejected and which have I acquired? What has happened to me as a result; both personally and professionally? (Evans et al., 2005, p. 270).

The respondents commented on the ways in which the interviews had allowed them the time and space to reflect on elements of their practice and why they did what they did. A couple of the participants commented that they found the interviews themselves to be a type of professional learning, in the sense that it allowed them to articulate facets of their professional practice that they had not

discussed in such depth before. Reflecting on what people said about online forums being competitive and rather scary places; each lecturer perceptibly trying to outdo the other, made me think about not only where discussions of professional practices take place, the situational view, but also the cognitive and affective elements to the discussions.

I previously managed a programme called ALDAP: the Associate Lecturer Development Programme. The programme culminated with a 'professional dialogue': a formal discussion in which a facilitator discussed professional practices and learning with the individual undertaking the programme. Comments from the individuals taking part varied enormously depending upon which facilitator they undertook the dialogue with. (There were 13 – one for each of the 13 regions of the OU.) Although they weren't conducting research, some of the elements of the dialogue mirrored facets of my research interviews. Some facilitators clearly made the whole process seem like a test (it did result in certification from SEDA), some clearly didn't, and engaged in a much more collegial exchange.

Within the context of my interviews the respondent validation was pretty good. Nearly all respondents read their interview transcript and 50% of them altered it. In one case I was very disappointed that this happened! The person concerned clearly felt, on reflection, that he had been too frank within the interview, and the notes came back tracked with the changes that he wanted to make. In this case – his more candid and very interesting comments had been removed. I wonder if this would have happened if I had been an 'outsider', or was it because he felt that my employment within the OU made this a 'risky business'. So I wondered ... did that compromise the research or enrich it? It's a difficult one. His choice; it's his dialogue so he has the power to alter it. But it does raise the issue of how the post-

interview reflection impacts on the actual relationship at the time between researcher and participant. He clearly found it easy at the time to articulate some pretty gritty statements about the organisation, but reflected after the event on how I may have perceived them – or was it, what I was going to use them for. I hope, not the latter ... that would be very depressing.

So I'm meandering now; I started off asking myself how this whole experience, how the research had impacted on my own professional identity. In particular, how the strengthening of my feminist identity has contributed to my own feelings of self-salience (Eisele and Stake, 2008). I find the ways in which Eisele and Stake conceptualise differences between feminist attitudes and feminist identities. The difference as they describe, is subtle: they describe it as 'collective or social identity' (p. 233): the adoption of feminist attitudes and self-identification as a feminist. The research encouraged me to explore my feminist identity and to question, more deeply, the ways in which this identity helps me to make sense of the world. The discussion in my last blog post, the one in which the participant radically changed his transcript after the interview, presents a good example of how, in this instance, my feminist beliefs and identity helped me to accept this change (even though, as I said before, it did leave me frustrated in one way). It would have been interesting to explore the participant's own beliefs in terms of his thoughts on research and researchers. I was interested to read about the five stages of feminist identity development identified by Downing and Roush (1985):

- passive acceptance of traditional gender roles and gender-role attitudes
- revelation (initial challenge of/ to the above)
- embeddedness – emanation (seeking out others with similar views)

- establishment of feminist identity with increasing emphasis on the positive features of being female
- integrating the past identity with the present and experiencing increased levels of self-salience and self-efficacy.

My research certainly developed my feminist identity by turning what I felt to be the right ways of going about research, into support and grounding of those beliefs by reading and relating to the writing of others on this subject. Josselson describes this process in terms of the lifepath of women in her books *Finding Herself* (1987), *Revising Herself* (1996), and elaborating on how individuals create their identities in relation to others – *Playing Pygmalion* (2007). This raised consciousness on the ways in which my own identity was developing, created for me, a much reduced sense of cognitive dissonance and certainly contributed positively to the formation of a nascent academic identity.

Acknowledgement that my research would never be value-free, and embracing this as a positive element of the research had a knock-on effect in other areas of my life and work. Growing up in a particularly patriarchal part of the country, I grew up with listening to the tenet that acknowledging grey areas was a sign of weakness (along with changing your mind). It was quite liberating to have the confidence to confront these assertions with my now founded and grounded beliefs.

I also found it interesting to consider what Deutsch (2004) terms acknowledging the power relationships within the research interview. They were very diverse, but for me depended more upon where they took place, rather than any gender differences. The interviews that took place in the respondents' homes were

considerably more relaxed than those that took place in an external venue. The telephone interviews perhaps, and interestingly, produced the most revelatory data, with an increased use of metaphor and anecdote; possibly to overcome the remote nature of the communication?

In summary; I have found that the research journey has had a profound impact upon me, my identity and the ways in which I perceive things. It has changed my working practices, opened up new avenues for exploration; I view the completion of it, not as an ending, but as a beginning.

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Appendix 2 Pilot interview questions

Strand 01

Teaching and staff development

1. Tell me a bit about your teaching with the OU
2. Your teaching prior to this
3. Tell me about your teaching and how it fits in with your life
4. To what extent was the teaching you've done, face to face?
5. Can you tell me a little about your face-to face-teaching?
6. What preparation did you have for teaching – did it prepare you for the reality?
7. Why do you attend staff development events?
8. Did they affect your teaching – how?
9. How do you feel after staff development events?
10. What do you feel contributes most to the continuous improvement of your teaching?
11. What makes you feel you are doing a good job face to face?
12. What do you think your key strengths are as a teacher?

Strand 02

Communities of practice

1. In what ways do you link up with other HE teachers?

2. What sort of professional stuff do you discuss when you talk to other HE teachers?
3. How do you feel that this affects your teaching?
4. What makes you feel that you are doing a good job?
5. How do you know you are doing a good job?

Strand 03

Teaching online

1. When did you begin to teach online?
2. How did you feel when you began to teach online?
3. What impact did you think that the online environment would have on the relationship between you and your students?
4. Were you right and in what ways?
5. Can you give 4 key areas in which you feel you've developed a personal online teaching strategy that you feel pleased with?
6. What would you say are your key strengths personality wise – the things that enable you to 'get the message across' to your students? How does this change online?
7. How do you make this work online?
8. Do you miss face-to-face contact? If so, why?
9. Are there any areas where you feel online teaching serves your students better?
10. How do you translate that to teaching online?
11. What training have you had for teaching online?

Strand 04

Teaching and development

1. Have you done a PGCEHE?
2. Can you give 3 key ways that this prepared you for your current teaching role?
3. What do you see as the key ways in which you promote learning?
4. Do you see yourself as a teacher or a facilitator?
5. What do you think that the difference is?
6. What do you feel are your strongest points as a teacher?
7. How did you learn this?
8. How do you think staff development affects the student learning?
9. Describe how you think about your teaching. (Do you think before teaching, during or after?)
10. Can you tell me any little anecdotes that evoke times when you've gone away and really thought about an incident when teaching?
11. Can you tell me a little bit about any ways that they changed you /your teaching?

(I offer an example here if needed)

Appendix 3 Information for participants

Research Project Information for Participants

Researcher

Jacqueline Baxter

Associate Lecturer Development Coordinator

The Open University UK

J.a.baxter@open.ac.uk

01908 655460

Description

You are invited to participate in a research project that seeks to explore the contribution of training programmes to the creation of an online teaching identity. The information collected will be used in a pilot project report and will also contribute to research that will be completed in September 2009. It may also be used in presentations and /or publications relating to staff development and online teaching.

Potential Benefits and Risks

Your participation in this study requires a commitment of approximately 1 to 2 hours in which you will be talking with the researcher about your experiences of face-to-face and online teaching. If you decide to participate, your willingness to share your experiences and knowledge could provide valuable insights for

improving staff development for Higher Education teachers. There are no foreseeable risks or benefits to you personally with respect to your personal or professional status from participating in this study. However, it is possible that the interview may bring up sensitive or difficult topics for you. At any time before, during or after the interview you may ask for clarification. You are also welcome to take a break at any time during the interview.

Confidentiality

All data will remain confidential. With your permission the interview will be recorded on a digital recorder to ensure that the researcher's notes are complete. Only the researcher will have access to the interview write-up, notes and recording. These will be kept in a secure area.

The recording will be erased once the data has been extracted in the form of a typed transcript and this transcript will also be kept secure. Data will be compiled in such a way that you as an individual cannot be identified. A pseudonym will be assigned to you to differentiate you from other participants. In addition, data that may be used for future research will have any information that could identify you as an individual, removed.

Appendix 4 Application to University Ethics Committee

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AND MATERIALS ETHICS COMMITTEE (HPMEC) PROFORMA

Please complete and send to:

John Oates (j.m.oates@open.ac.uk), Chair,
Human Participants Materials Ethics Committee (HPMEC),
Centre for Childhood Development and Learning (CHDL),
Briggs, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes

Also send a copy to Research-ethics@open.ac.uk

If you have any queries before you fill in this form please look at the
Research Ethics (intranet) website: <http://intranet.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/>

Title of project

A short, descriptive title.

Analysis of the contribution of training programmes in the formation of teacher identity in a virtual learning environment.

Schedule

Time frame for the research and its data collection phase(s).

Pilot phase to begin January 2007.

Main phase to begin September 2007–September 2009.

Abstract

A summary of the main points of the research, understandable by a non-specialist.

This research aims to examine the impact of the online environment on teaching identity and ways in which professional development can contribute to online teacher identity formation in the higher education environment.

The study reviews current theories which contribute to the understanding of teaching identity and assesses how valid they remain within the realm of a virtual teaching and learning community. The research takes a social perspective of identity formation in order to determine in what way the online teaching identity differs from that within a face-to-face environment and how best to support the creation and maintenance of an online identity via the tool of staff development and accreditation. The research aims not only to look at what may be needed in order to create a buoyant teaching identity but also to inform on ways to engage the deeper reflective processes in order to permeate and shape the higher education teacher of the future.

The study focuses on staff working within higher education in a single UK-based university.

Source(s) of funding

Details of the external or internal funding body (e.g. ESRC, MRC).

OU fee waiver for EdD programme.

Justification for research

What contribution to knowledge, policy, practice and people's lives the research will make?

Information into the type and genre of staff development needed to motivate, foster and develop higher education teaching staff transferring from a face-to-face environment to a virtual learning environment (VLE).

Investigators

Give names and units of all persons involved in the collection and handling of individual data. Please name one person as Principal Investigator (PI).

Jacqueline Baxter (PI).

Frank Banks (Supervisor).

Project registered with FELS data protection officer: Hugh Balhatchet on 10.12.06.

Published ethical guidelines to be followed

For example: BERA, BPS, BSA (see Research Ethics website for more information).

BERA.

Location(s) of data collection

Give details of where and when data will be collected. If on private, corporate or institutional premises, indicate what approvals are gained/required.

The Open University UK (13 regions and MK).

Participants

Give details of the population from which you will be sampling and how this sampling will be done.

Sampling from the Associate Lecturer base.

Respondents will be self-selecting and drawn from across the 13 regions of The Open University. The pilot phase will involve 3 participants and the main phase of the research, 15.

The participants will initially be sent questionnaires to determine their teaching background and experience; these will then be followed up with a series of interviews.

Recruitment procedures

How will you identify and approach potential participants?

Participants will be identified via regional staff tutors and be approached by email in the first instance. Information on the nature of the research will be provided via the 'information for participants form' (attached) and 'consent form' (attached).

Consent

Give details of how informed consent will be gained and attach copies of information sheet(s) and consent form(s). Give details of how participants can withdraw consent and what will happen to their data in such a case (see the Research Ethics website for an advisory document).

Informed consent will be gained by email copies of the informed consent form (attached). This will be accompanied by the information sheet (attached).

Methodology

Outline the method(s) that will be employed to collect and analyse data.

Case study within one UK university (The Open University).
Qualitative interviews analysed using discourse analysis and theme coding.
Grounded approach.

Data Protection

Give details of registration of the project under the DP Act and the procedures to be followed re: storage and disposal of data to comply with the Act.

Interviews to be digitally recorded and disposed of when transcriptions have taken place.

Recompense to participants

Normally, recompense is only given for expenses and inconvenience, otherwise it might be seen as coercion/inducement to participate. Give details of any recompense to participants.

Expenses and travel.

Deception

Give details of the withholding of any information from participants, or misrepresentation or other deception that is an integral part of the research. Any such deception should be fully justified.

None.

Risks

Detail any foreseen risks to participants or researchers and steps that will be taken to minimise/counter these.

None.

Debriefing

Give details of how information will be given to participants after data collection to inform them of the purpose of their participation and the research more broadly.

Via email notification and paper.

Declaration

Declare here that the research will conform to the above protocol and that any significant changes or new issues will be raised with the HPMEC before they are implemented. A Final Report form will need to be filled in once the research has ended.

Signature(s) Jacqueline Baxter (student services), Frank Banks (supervisor)

Appendix 5 Main study questions

Interview 1

1. Can you tell me something about yourself and your career, and how you came into teaching at the OU?
2. How have you learned to teach?
3. Tell me about learning that you feel has made a difference to the way in which you do your job?
4. What makes you feel as if you are doing a good job?
5. Describe how you feel about teaching online and compare this to teaching face to face?
6. Do you feel that student expectations are different online, compared to face to face? Can you tell me a little more about this?
7. Where do you find that you get most support within your teaching role?
8. Do you feel part of a community in any way?
9. How does your teaching role link to your day job?
10. What kind of learning/development do you feel would be valuable to you now and in the future?

Interview 2

1. Leading on from our first conversation, have you learned anything further about working and communicating with your students online (either formally or informally)?
2. What further contact have you had with students online?
3. You mentioned last time that you were going to be doing some further learning/training in how to teach online, can you tell me a little bit about it and whether and in what way it has changed your practices?

4. How did the experiences above, make you feel about your own teaching?
5. We spoke about your confidence in using technology to teach, can you tell me if there have been any interactions with students that have made you feel more confident about teaching online?
6. You mentioned that you are often online via your (phone, Twitter, Facebook account) – do you feel that your interactions with students are increasing via your use of these online tools outside of the University?
7. What do you feel about the tools that the University is offering you to teach? Which do you prefer, internal tools or using tools outside of the University to communicate with your students?
8. What do you feel that you need now in order to feel motivated to engage with new online pedagogies?
9. Are there any elements of your online role that you feel unsure about?
10. What rewarding instances of teaching have you had online recently?
11. What negative instances of teaching online have you had recently and how do you feel you can avoid /improve in this way in the future?
12. You mention engaging in online games/other communities outside of the University – do you feel that these have any educational potential? If so, how?
13. What do you feel would make the biggest single difference to the way that you feel about using technology to teach?

Appendix 6 HEA Standards (currently under revision)

AREAS OF ACTIVITY, CORE KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL VALUES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK

Areas of activity

1. Design and planning of learning activities and/or programmes of study
2. Teaching and/or supporting student learning
3. Assessment and giving feedback to learners
4. Developing effective environments and student support and guidance
5. Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning
6. Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

Core knowledge

Knowledge and understanding of:

1. The subject material
2. Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
3. How students learn, both generally and in the subject
4. The use of appropriate learning technologies
5. Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
6. The implications of quality assurance and enhancement for professional practice

Professional values

1. Respect for individual learners

2. Commitment to incorporating the process and outcomes of relevant research, scholarship and/or professional practice
3. Commitment to development of learning communities
4. Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity
5. Commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice

RELATIONSHIP TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SCHEME

Guidance and support is offered through the work of the Higher Education Academy for HE Institutions to be accredited for their application and use of the new standards framework.

Please see www.heacademy.ac.uk for further details.

Appendix 7 Interview schedule and pseudonyms

Name (pseudonym)	Date of first interview	Date of second interview	Number
Mark	12.01.10	09.09.10	1
Judy	15.01.10	09.08.10	2
James	25.02.10	15.09.10	3
Luke	26.02.10	01.10.10	4
Grace	01.03.10	03.10.10	5
Maria	03.03.10	10.10.10	6
Jasper	07.03.10	15.10.10	7
Louise	09.03.10	16.10.10	8
Jenny	18.03.10	12.07.10	9
Sam	25.03.10	10.07.10	10
Anna	27.03.10	19.07.10	11

